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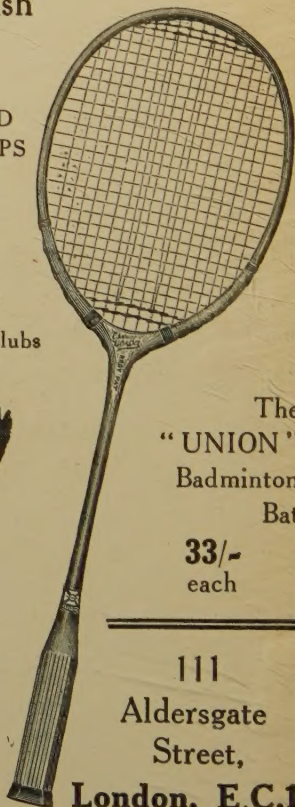
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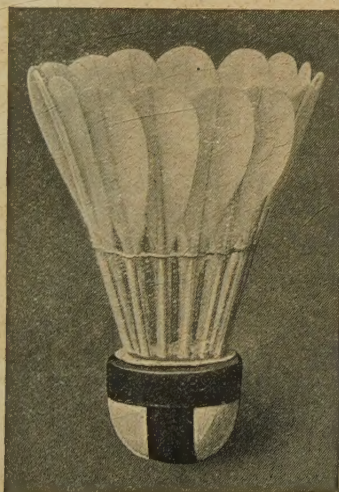
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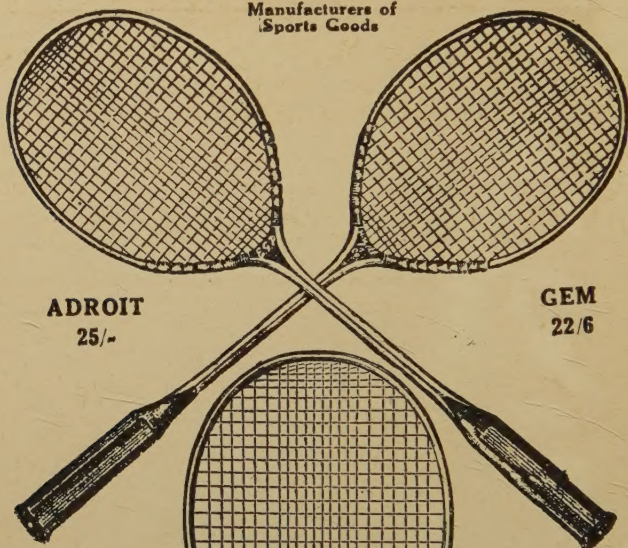
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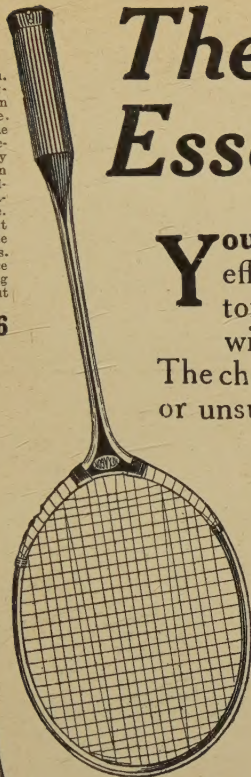


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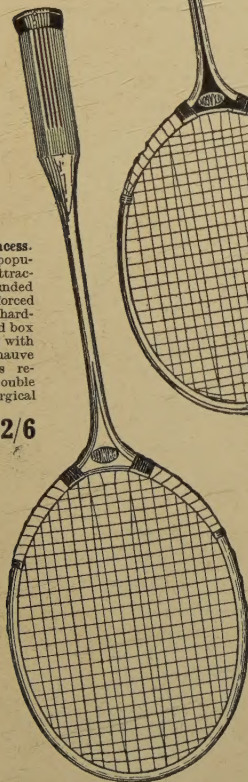
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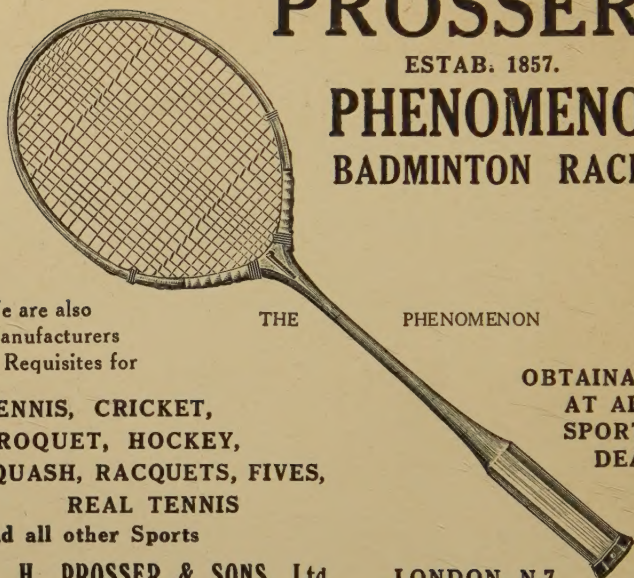
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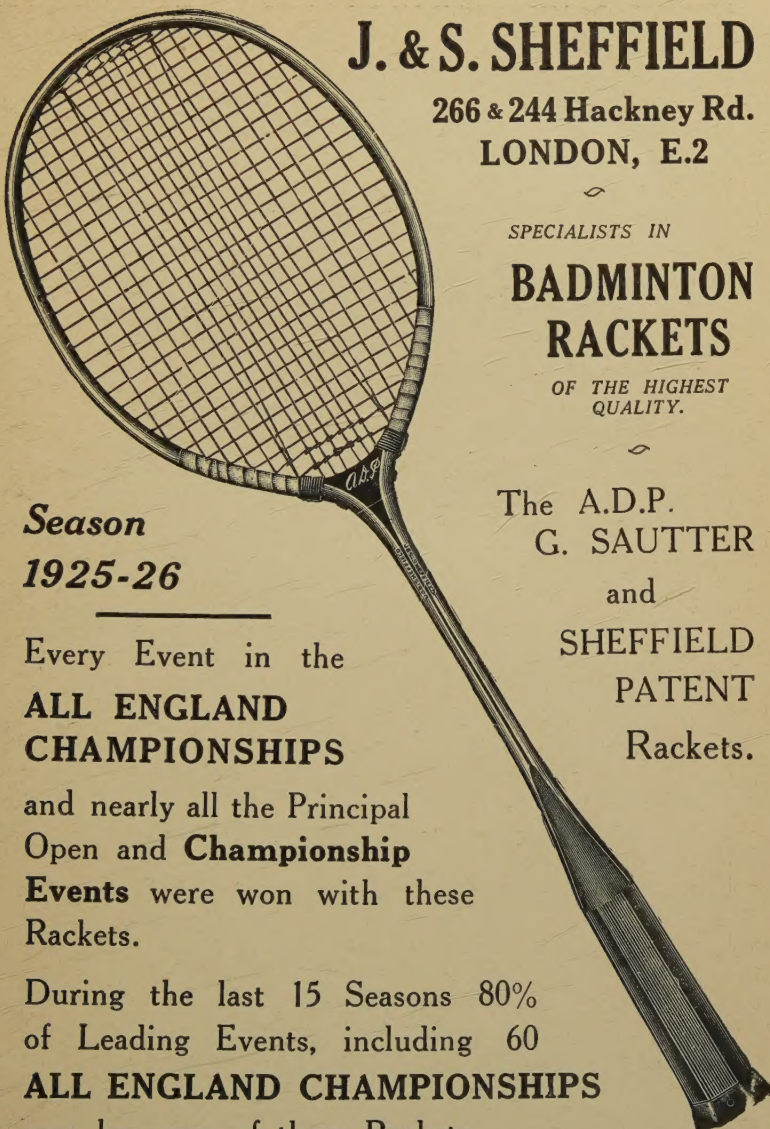
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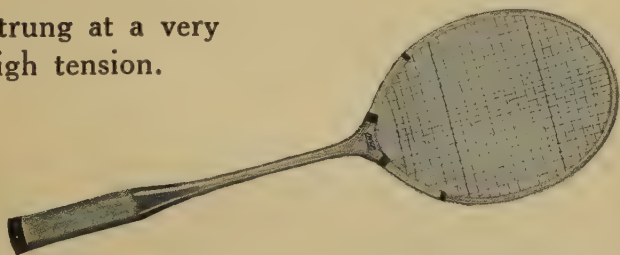
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FOREHAND SMASH

The arm and racquet are not yet at their full stretch, but the body has already begun its forward movement and the weight is already being transferred to the left foot.

(See page 15.)

Edward Stanton

Mrs. R. C. Tragett

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PREFACE

THERE are few people better qualified to write a book on Badminton than Mrs. Tragett. She is a player of the very highest standard, with a splendid knowledge of the game, also—to my mind most important in a book of this kind—she has the happy knack of imparting what she knows to others in a readily assimilated form.

The writing of *Badminton for Beginners* should, I feel, earn for the author the gratitude of all embryo players. I would say to beginners, get this book, read it carefully, and so find out for yourselves the almost Roman road it opens to the coveted position of a “star.”

In conclusion, I would like to say how pleased I am to have the opportunity of writing an appreciation of this book, and in the interests of Badminton I hope it will have the universal support of all would-be players. I would add that I forgive Mrs. Tragett for her reference to my idiosyncrasies, at the same time heartily agreeing with her when she says, “take not the slightest notice of what he does”!

J. F. DEVLIN.

14th August, 1926.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE following pages, as their title implies, are primarily intended for readers who have little or no knowledge of the game of Badminton but who wish to learn to play it well. During the last few years several books have been published, notably those by Sir G. A. Thomas and Mr. G. S. B. Mack, which deal with the game in detail; but it has seemed to me that there is still room for an attempt to teach the rudiments of Badminton to those whose knowledge of it is not advanced enough for them to grasp a more technical exposition. I have therefore begun from the very beginning, and have pursued my subject with the idea of leading the reader forward by easy stages to a point at which the real science and art of the game will be comprehensible to him; and it is my hope that any beginners who care to read the book will do so with the same idea of *gradual progress*; that they will read a little—and experiment with the preliminaries—read a little more, and experiment again, until they have to some extent grasped the technique and fundamental *purpose* of the strokes described. After which—and not before, if they will conform to my plan—they will proceed to the later sections, from which they will certainly derive more practical help than if they had read the whole book without pausing to put its precepts into practice.

I may add that in putting forward my own views with regard to technique, tactics, etc., I am not for a

moment implying that other methods or teachings may not be equally efficacious. But I do not think I have anywhere laid down any sort of rule which is not fairly generally accepted by experts; and it is also my belief that no beginner who models his technique and style upon the methods I have suggested will be in any sense led astray in the matter of a sound basis on which to build up his game.

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BADMINTON FOR BEGINNERS

PART ONE

SECTION I

THE RACQUET.

The first thing a beginner at Badminton should do is to buy a good racquet. Any reliable manufacturer can be depended on to supply what is required, but I do not advise anyone to aim at cheapness. The best production of all good makers is priced at about thirty shillings, and this price (approximately) should be paid. Individual preference as to weight and balance must naturally be followed, but the weight should be about $5\frac{1}{2}$ ounces, and personally I believe in having a racquet with a light head. I do not think that a heavy head makes any appreciable difference to the power of hitting hard, and I do think that a light head is helpful in the matter of wrist work; but all good players do not agree with me, so beginners may please themselves in this respect. The racquet should be tightly strung, should always be kept in a press when not in use, never exposed to damp or the heat of a fire, and when it has a pronounced tendency to warp (as tightly strung racquets often have) it should be replaced in its press in between each match.

Beginners who really wish to improve should, if possible, join a club in which there are some good players, so that they may watch their methods and try to profit by them. The "best" player in a club, however, is not necessarily a "good" player, even though

locally regarded as such, so beginners will do well to attend the nearest Championship Meeting at which real "cracks" are competing, in order to obtain as early as possible some appreciation of the standard of first-class play, on which they should try to model their efforts thenceforward. Faulty methods and bad style are things not easily eradicated, so the point is an important one. It must be allowed that faulty methods and bad style do not constitute an absolute bar to first-class play of a certain kind, but they undoubtedly impede the highest development of that "artistry" by which great players are known and by which they are remembered when their day is done.

HOW TO HOLD THE RACQUET.

The manner of gripping the handle varies a little, but not to any great extent among the best exponents of the game. What I shall call the "orthodox" grip—which I believe to lead to the best all-round results—is as follows:

Grasp the handle *at the end*, so that the leather base does not protrude beyond the palm of your hand. This is important, although a point often neglected, as any protruding of the handle will cramp the free movement of the wrist.

The *side of the handle* should fit into the V of the fingers and thumb; i.e. when the racquet is held downwards with the thumb against the body, the face of the racquet, not its *frame*, should lie against the calf of the leg. If the arm is extended in front (without turning the wrist) the *side of the frame* should then be in line with the hand and arm.

A different grip is usually adopted by net-players, at all events while they are up at the net; in their case the *front* of the handle fits into the V of finger and

thumb. This grip, though well adapted to the special requirements of net-play, is, in my view, detrimental to any other branch of the game, and though a certain number of successful players may be seen to employ it I could not recommend any beginner to follow their example unless she (in this particular case) intends to devote herself solely to net-play. The principal objection to such a grip for general purposes is that it limits the freedom of the wrist, and anything which tends to check that freedom will tend to check the highest development of scientific play. If players, other than net-players, who adopt this unorthodox grip are carefully watched, it will, I think, always be observed that wrist work is not a feature of their game.

THE BACKHAND GRIP.

I should like to be able to say that there is only one correct grip for backhand strokes, but there is too much weight of evidence to the contrary against me, so I must admit that there are two methods to choose from. I naturally have the greater faith in the grip I adopt myself, and I have the support of two such great players as Messrs. Devlin and Mack; but on the other hand Sir George Thomas, of equal eminence, is in the opposite camp.

The grip that I advocate involves a slight shifting of the forehand grip from right to left, so that when the racquet is held across the body the knuckles will be pointing upwards instead of outwards, the thumb will lie along the *back* of the handle, pointing towards the racquet-face, and the wrist will be in a flattened position.

Sir George Thomas advocates no change of grip at all. His method is adopted, I believe, by many other good players, and it must be freely admitted that Sir George

is one of the finest stylists and all-round players the game has yet produced. Few players, moreover, use their wrists more, or to greater advantage, than he does, so that there cannot be many arguments against his method.

Personally, however, I remain strongly in favour of a change of grip for backhand strokes, particularly for women, and *especially* (in their case) for backhand strokes which require any degree of power. I do not believe that the average woman has a sufficiently strong wrist for her to play such shots effectively unless she adopts the grip I have described. I do not mean that it need be adopted for every variety of backhand stroke—delicate drop-shots may be played as well one way as the other from certain positions on the court—but for backhand “drives” or “clears” I strongly advocate it. Many drop-shots, also, such as call for great control and very accurate placing, are in my view much assisted by a change of grip, as the flattened wrist and the position of the thumb along the back of the handle help considerably to supply that control and that ability to direct the shuttle as required.

One word of caution is needed here, where the true beginner is concerned. In *no* circumstances (when the orthodox forehand grip is employed) should strokes played on the left side of the body be attempted with the *forehand* face of the racquet. Whether a change of grip is adopted or not, backhand shots must be played—except *in extremis*—with the opposite face of the racquet to that used for forehand strokes. Nothing is more ungainly or ineffectual than the wrong method mentioned. Net-players, with their special grip, often use the same racquet-face on the fore and backhand, but the special grip permits them to do so without awkwardness; and even so it is not advisable at any distance from the net.

FOOTWORK.

The weight should never be allowed to rest on the heels during a rally, nor for a few seconds before the rally begins. This does not mean that players should tittup about on their toes; that would only lead to loss of balance. But the *weight* must be kept off the heels in order to procure quickness about the court and facility in beginning to move.

The position of the feet when waiting to receive service seems to be rather a matter of individual preference, but one foot or the other should always be in advance, and players must find out for themselves whether the right or left foot forward seems most natural and comfortable and which position helps them to reach the shuttle soonest. It will sometimes be found that this varies according to the court in which the player is standing while being served to.

For the actual playing of strokes the correct position of the feet is very important. For forehand shots, as almost everybody knows, the left foot should usually be a little in advance of the other; on the backhand, the *right* foot must be in advance and rather across the left, to allow free play for the arm and racquet. The further behind the striker the shuttle is, the further across his right foot must be, or he will get no power behind his shot, for his body will be in the way.

The position of the feet is important from two points of view, apart from the added quickness induced by correct footwork. For one thing, unless the feet are rightly placed, the muscles of the body, including those of the arm and wrist, will not be working harmoniously, and any stiffness and awkwardness of

muscular action will militate against the effective execution of a stroke. Secondly, correct footwork—because of the consequent ease and harmony of the body's movement—is a necessary ingredient in good style; and, *other things being equal*, a “stylist” always has some advantage over a player with bad style. Incidentally, it is always worth trying to do a thing correctly and gracefully, if only from an æsthetic point of view! To watch such players as Sir George Thomas, Mr. Mack and Mr. Devlin, must give greater pleasure than to watch people whose feet are constantly stumbling and entangled and whose arms and wrists are sticking out in all manner of directions owing to a want of ease in the working of their muscles. Nobody, of course, should make an affectation of gracefulness, but much can be achieved, even in the case of the naturally ungraceful, by the study of footwork and correct technique.

We now come to a description of the various types of stroke that may be used in Badminton. There are, broadly speaking, only four types—the smash, the drop, the clear, and the drive. The service, which I shall deal with later on, is always some variant of one of the last three. The game includes a great variety of strokes—hence its special fascination—but each variety is a modification or a development of one of the four main types.

THE SMASH.

This, as its name suggests, is the principal attacking shot in the game and holds necessarily a high place in importance. No player can reach a really high standard (apart from net-play, which demands rather specialised shots) who cannot achieve at least a moderately effective smash. On the other hand, the power to smash cannot

wholly compensate for an absence of capacity in other directions, so that it should never be concentrated on too exclusively.

For its satisfactory execution the following points should be studied.

1. The proper distribution of balance, involving correct footwork. The knees must be bent during the preliminary action; the right foot must be drawn a little back, as in all forehand shots, but in this case the weight must rest chiefly upon the right foot till the moment before hitting the shuttle; the body must incline backwards (the degree varying with individual players) during the racquet's upward swing. When the shuttle is being hit, these positions undergo a change (see Frontispiece); at the moment of hitting, the body should already have *begun* its forward movement, the weight should have *begun* to fall on the left foot, and after the shuttle has been struck the body must come well forward while the racquet follows through. (The position of the right foot at the conclusion of the "follow through" varies with different players.)

2. The shuttle must be hit at the highest stretch of arm and racquet—*not* with a bent elbow, which is the most common and fatal tendency with beginners. Unless the arm is fully outstretched no real power can be put into the shot, as, owing to the bend in the elbow, only the muscles of the forearm can be brought strongly into action, and these are insufficient for really hard smashing. I do not mean to imply that no shot involving an overhand action must ever be played with a bent elbow, but for the purpose of the "smash proper" the arm action *must* permit of the passage of force from the shoulder, which a bent elbow prevents.

3. No rule can be laid down as to the precise point, relating to position, at which the shuttle should be struck, for this probably varies a trifle with every good player. But there are two main differences to be noted. The most prevalent method—among women I should say the *only* method—is to hit the shuttle when it is at a point above, and slightly in front of, the striker's right shoulder. (I am dealing, of course, with right-handed players throughout; those who are left-handed will naturally reverse all directions.)

The other method is to hit the shuttle when it is at a point a little to the left and slightly behind the head, a method usually called "smashing round the head." This form has been adopted from time to time by many fine players—notably, in the past, by Mr. G. A. Sautter and Mr. P. D. Fitton, both of them outstandingly effective and powerful smashers. At the present time Mr. H. S. Uber is the most prominent exponent of "round the head" smashing, while Sir George Thomas also favours it to some extent, though less noticeably than Mr. Uber. Other first-class players also adopt this method, some more and some less pronouncedly, while others rarely do so at all. It will, therefore, be seen that the choice must be left to "natural selection." Whichever seems most comfortable to the individual will doubtless be the best for him to adopt. As I have mentioned, the first method described is the one almost, if not quite, exclusively employed by women, so it may be assumed that it is the one most suitable to them.

4. It is of great importance to get well behind the shuttle before attempting to smash, for if it is hit too soon, while the body is still inclining backwards, the full force of the stroke is not likely to make itself felt, and

the player will furthermore be slightly off his balance after making it, and therefore less ready for a quick return. This is not always the case, Mr. K. G. Livingstone—a very powerful smasher—being an occasional exception to the general rule; but even he, in my opinion, sometimes puts himself at a disadvantage in the matter of quick recovery when he has smashed from the position described, and it is usually admitted to be the wrong position for the average player.

5. The racquet must follow through after the smash has been played. Following through, as most people are aware, means that the racquet must not be checked as soon as the shuttle has left it, but must be allowed to complete its natural swing; in this way the head of the racquet will follow the shuttle to the extent that the arc of the swing permits. Such following and such unchecked swinging greatly assist in the imparting of force to the stroke.

A necessary ingredient in smashing, which may be bracketed with the follow through, is that of using the wrist. The vital “sting” or “snap” so much to be desired is produced principally by the action of the wrist, which must be brought well over and down after the shuttle has been hit. (See Plate II.) The absence of this wrist action deprives the smash of a great deal of its value, for the shuttle does not travel downwards nearly so sharply unless the wrist is used as indicated. Many otherwise good smashes, in fact, travel beyond the back line if a snap of the wrist has not provided the shorter angle.

While pace and sting are of obvious value in smashing, the highest effectiveness will not be achieved without the equally important factor of placing; but this subject, in detail, has no part in these earlier pages, which are devoted to trying to explain the nature of the different

strokes and the elementary methods of production. It will therefore be enough to mention here that placing must be carefully studied before the smash can be used to its best advantage.

One further hint may be given. Position on court must be duly considered when smashing. It is not much use hoping to win the point outright with a smash if the striker is standing near the back line. Height makes some difference in this respect, but even the tallest player is not likely to score by pace alone if he is farther back than the long-service line. Beginners are therefore warned against a waste of energy in putting their utmost strength into a smash when the result is not likely to be really effective. Hard hitting is always to be advocated, of course, but strength should never be wasted.

Position on court must also determine the *angle* of a smash. Too many players—not only beginners—forget the importance of this, and are to be seen hitting at the same angle from the short-service line as if they were near the back of the court. They are then surprised and hurt if their shot goes out, and complain that the shuttle is too fast! The nearer to the net the shuttle is, the sharper the angle of the smash must be and the more the wrist must be used. Nor is it any use trying to smash when the shuttle has fallen too low, as it is bound to find the net. Some other shot should be played instead.

THE DROP-SHOT.

There are almost limitless variations of this type of stroke, and the manner of playing even the simplest sort is not easy to describe. The drop-shot is the most delicate stroke in the game and should therefore not be attempted too soon by beginners, who will do well



Photograph by Millar & Harris

FINISH OF FOREHAND SMASH

This illustrates the "follow through," and also shows how the wrist has been brought right over to bring the shuttle sharply down. (See page 17.)

to learn how to smash, clear, return smashes, and serve, before indulging in what are always to some degree "fancy shots," even of a simple kind. Some elementary rules of technique may be given here, but the subject will be dealt with more fully later on.

For drop-shots played near the net—which, if not too near, are the easiest kind—the wrist must be kept at once firm and flexible. Experts vary a little in their manner of playing such shots, and no rule of correctness can well be laid down; it is easier to say what should *not* be done. The shuttle, then, must not be jabbed or jerked or pushed at, or it will not behave as required. A quiet, gentle yet firm, *lifting* action is needed—such as will make the shuttle travel with an even flight, neither too fast nor too slow. Sir George Thomas, in *The Art of Badminton*, describes the necessary touch for drop-shots as "the velvet glove" touch, which well conveys its requirements. Gentleness concealing firmness. Mr. Mack coincides in this view by emphasising the necessity for firmness as well as delicacy. The firmness, in fact, controls the delicacy.

Drop-shots may be played from any position on the court, under or over, fore or backhand. Overhead forehand drop-shots should be rather sparingly used, except by the back-liner in a "back-and-front" formation, who may often very usefully employ them in leading up to an attacking shot. It should be remembered that all kinds of drop-shot are to be regarded as, primarily, a means to an end, the end being "opportunity for attack." So when a good opportunity presents itself for a forehand smash it is only very rarely better tactics to neglect it and employ a drop-shot instead. Such considerations will be dealt with at a more

suitable stage. For the moment I shall only emphasise the velvet-glove point, as to the actual method of production with the repeated warning: "to those about to drop—*don't*, if you have a good chance to smash instead."

THE CLEAR.

The essence of this stroke is to place the shuttle so near the back line as to minimise the danger of an attacking shot in return. We have seen, on the subject of smashing, that this cannot be done effectually from the back of the court. It is essential, therefore, that the shuttle should reach a point somewhere near the back line, short clearing being as fatal a habit as any in which Badminton players can indulge.

A clear is, in general, a purely defensive shot, but it is one that every beginner must aim at mastering, for in the important domain of defence good clearing is an incalculable advantage. It may, like the drop-shot, be played from any position on the court, overhead or underhand, either on the fore or backhand. A backhand clear from the back of the court is the one that presents the most difficulty to novices, and it is for this shot particularly that I advocate the change of grip mentioned earlier. Considerable strength, in addition to the requisite "knack," is needed for the average woman to hit, backhand, so light an object as a shuttlecock from one end (and particularly one corner) of the court to the other, and I am convinced that to do so effectually she should adopt the grip I advise, whether the shot is played over or underhand. Players who are weak in this department present a constant target for attack as soon as they get into the left hand court, and it is essential to high-class play that the weakness should be overcome.

Plenty of room must be allowed for the arm and racquet, or the body—being in the way—will detract from the power of the shot. For this reason the position of the feet, as previously explained, is particularly important. Foot-work, in fact, is of much higher importance in dealing with backhand shots than for those on the forehand. In the case of the latter, liberties may be—and often are—taken in this respect without disastrous effect, the reason being that the body does not impede the free movement of the arm on the forehand, even if the feet are not correctly placed.

In returning a high clear on the backhand, the shuttle should always be taken as *high* as possible, and not allowed to drop till it can be hit more or less underhand. (See Plate III.) This latter is a very common mistake for beginners to make, and one which it is difficult to overcome, so that we frequently see much more advanced players making the same error simply because they have never learnt to correct it—or even because they have never realised that it *is* an error. The shuttle is not always reached in time, of course, for it to be hit while it is still at all high, but when possible it should almost always be done. The reason should be fairly obvious: the opponent's clearing shot has usually been played defensively, often from an awkward position in the court, so that it is important to return the shuttle as *soon* as possible, to avoid giving him time to recover himself. A clear, in fact, is more often than not played merely to gain time; if, then, the shuttle is allowed to drop till it is shoulder high, or even lower, so much the more time will have been gained. It should, therefore, be dealt with at the earliest possible moment, no matter whether a clear or a drop-shot is played in return.

Incidentally, the action of hitting the shuttle in this position is not an easy one to read; that is, it is harder for an opponent to judge of what sort of shot to expect, whereas if the shuttle is allowed to drop it rather limits the striker's choice. The extra time gained by his opponents will have allowed them to recover their positions, and a backhand underhand drop-shot requires to be very accurate for any safety if the opponents *are* in position; so that it becomes almost necessary for the mediocre player to fall back on a defensive clear in his turn, thereby throwing away a possible opportunity for getting on to the attack.

I am afraid I have rather laboured this point—and hope I have not obscured it in my attempt to deal with it in some detail; but it is a point on which I feel rather strongly, having seen chance after chance thrown away in the manner described, and since it is—as I have said—a common fault with beginners, I do feel anxious to warn them rather specially against it.

This difficult shot, therefore, should be practised assiduously till the player is confident of being able to clear to any part of the opposite court. Naturally, a diagonal clear to the opposite backhand corner will be the most difficult of all, as it will require to be harder hit, but it must not be neglected, as it is a shot which (particularly in singles) will constantly be required.

Clearing on the forehand presents no special difficulties, provided the shuttle is within reach; the point always to bear in mind is that it must be cleared *far* enough—that is, so far back as to prevent the opponent from smashing really hard. When a player is “on the run” clearing is naturally less easy than when he is in position, but he must learn at all costs to hit the shuttle

far back, so that he may recover his position for the next return. If he is so placed that he cannot hope to clear *safely* he must play some other shot instead—or be content to lose the rally, as, of course, he often must!

THE DRIVE.

This highly useful shot is not employed as often as it might be by the majority of players. I do not know the reason for its neglect; it is a favourite shot of my own and it does not strike me as presenting any very special difficulties. Yet comparatively few players (even experts) indulge in it at all systematically as a branch of attack, and hardly any women attempt it at all. It is a stroke that is specially well adapted to back-line play, which is one reason, perhaps, for its neglect by women, who rarely occupy that position on court, but it is also a most valuable weapon of attack *against* a back-and-front combination, so beginners will be very unwise to neglect it altogether.

The stroke itself, as its name suggests, is a level shot, played at about the height of the net, which the shuttle must pass very closely if the stroke is to fulfil its requirements. It is usually played from half-way down court, and may be played either fore or back-hand, down the corresponding side-lines or across the court. The last variety is more often used than side-line drives (especially against back-and-front) by players who do not specialise in these. The object of a drive down the side-line is usually to put the opponent in difficulties owing to the awkward angle at which the shuttle reaches him—generally near the face (the nearer the better, for the striker!)—or else to constitute a form of “passing-shot” against a player who is advancing to

deal with an anticipated drop-shot. The shuttle must be hit rather hard and sharply; the forearm and wrist should control the pace and angle. The stroke is, so to speak, a modified clear and an exaggerated drop-shot. Firmness and accuracy are needed for the successful production of the stroke, which may, without change of action, be extended into a clear by lifting the angle and increasing the pace. Similarly, it may with the same action be modified into a drop-shot by means of a dragging movement of the forearm at the moment of striking, and by a diminution of force. The cross-court variety will be dealt with later on.

It should be mentioned here that, unlike other forehand shots, the forehand side-line drive can best be executed off the *right* foot. (See Plate IV.) The height and direction of the drive can be more correctly gauged in this way than when the left shoulder is a little turned towards the net, as occurs when the left foot is advanced. Experiment will prove the truth of this.

My advice to the beginner—if he earnestly wishes to learn how to play well and is ready to take advice—is that having read so far he should find one or two friends with similar desires who will spend some time with him on the Badminton court examining into their respective methods of stroke production with a view to discovering any bad flaws. I do not recommend these earnest (but probably mythical!) students to play real games at all until they have satisfied themselves that they have at least grasped the technical principle of all the shots mentioned thus far, and that they can to some extent put them into practice. A desire to learn, combined with an understanding of technique and the patience for steady practice, is the best foundation a promising beginner can possibly have.

SECTION II

THE SERVICE.

This is one of the most important and difficult branches of Badminton. So much so that I shall not attempt to deal with it elaborately at this stage, but will only try to give some general directions such as may help beginners to develop their service on correct lines.

The principal object in serving should always be to minimise the opponent's chance of dangerous attack. This must always be borne in mind; for the server at Badminton is always at a slight disadvantage, and eminently so unless he can serve well. There are two types, the "high" and the "short" serve. The position from which either type is delivered should not vary to any noticeable extent, for it is important to conceal the intention as far as possible. In general, then, the server should stand not more than about two feet behind the short-service line, or rather less if he prefers it; the distance from the centre and boundary lines is a matter for individual preference (though I shall have something further to say on that subject later) and may be varied according to the type of service contemplated or to the player to be served to. I recommend the beginner to practise serving from a point much nearer the middle than the boundary line; he can try variations later on.

The action of serving should vary as little as possible,

whatever kind of serve is delivered, so that it shall not be too easily anticipated. It is wisest, in my opinion, to hold the shuttle by the feathers between the finger, or fingers, and thumb; there is thus less danger of the shuttle's sticking slightly to the hand, as sometimes happens if the fingers close round the feathers or grasp the base. Many people adopt one of the latter methods quite successfully, but there is always the risk I have mentioned (which may spoil the service), and I therefore recommend beginners to hold the shuttle (with the base pointing downwards, of course) as I have described. I also strongly advise them to hold it *in front* of them rather than out at the right side. The latter way necessitates a more or less round-arm action that always tends to produce an "overhand" service, which is against the rules of the game. The subject is as difficult for me to avoid, when writing about Badminton, as was King Charles's head for Mr. Dick in *David Copperfield*, but I offer no excuse for referring to it several times, for players can hardly be reminded of the rule too often. It is one, unfortunately, that is often disregarded, even by advanced players, and seldom penalised, since the umpire's position makes it difficult for him to detect the breach; but it remains an important rule, and beginners should take great pains not to acquire a style of service which may lead them to break it. The shuttle, at the moment the service is delivered, *must* be below the waist-line. It will thus be seen that a round-arm service is rather likely to lead to a breach of the rule, as the left arm is not usually long enough to reach comfortably out to the side *and* to a point clearly below the waist-line; so that instinctively the hand holding the shuttle tends to rise

at the last moment—and the rule is broken. Some good players contrive to adopt this action without offending, but even so they come perilously near it very often, and for an opponent to have any doubt on the subject is almost as disconcerting for him as if the serve were actually a “foul.” All beginners, therefore, will be well advised—for their own sakes—to adopt a safe method of serving by holding the shuttle in front of them and keeping the racquet-head well below their wrists till the shuttle has been struck. (See Plate VI.)

THE HIGH SERVICE.

This type of serve should be delivered at an angle that will prevent the receiver's reaching the shuttle till after it has begun to fall, and the shuttle must be sent so far back in the court that if allowed to drop it will fall not more than seven or eight inches inside the long-service line. Anything short of this is a weak serve, and the nearer it falls to the line the better. Servers should not be too much afraid of sending the shuttle over the line. The majority of players are generally rather chary of leaving a good length high serve unless they are tolerably certain it is going to be a fault, and anyone who has misjudged one once or twice will be nervous of leaving any in future, so that it is far better to risk going too far than not far enough. A short high service is fatal against a strong player, as he is likely to win the point outright with a well-placed smash almost every time. Beginners must therefore practise this stroke very carefully, as weak serving is a very bad fault indeed. The question of where the serve should be placed is a more complicated one and will not be entered into at present. For my purpose

at the moment it is enough to say—hit high and hit well to the back of the service court.

THE SHORT SERVE.

This is the more difficult type. Some players seem to have a natural talent for it, and they are greatly to be envied; but others find it so hard that they seldom attempt it at all. As this necessarily limits a server's effectiveness he should do his best to master both types, partly for the sake of variety (much to be desired in all branches of the game) and partly because a really good short serve is of enormous value in first-class play. The reason is obvious. The principal object in serving being, as I have stated, to prevent one's opponent from attacking strongly, it will be seen that a serve which begins to drop the moment it has passed over the net must compel the opponent to hit the shuttle *upwards* instead of down. The chance for attack thus passes from him to the server's side—and though I am not dealing with tactics at present I may say, in passing, that attack is *the* thing to aim for in Badminton. Defence is essential also, but every stroke, including the service, should always be played with the idea of securing the attack as soon as possible.

To return to the short serve. It should pass not more than an inch above the tape, to be really safe, and it should fall not more than a few inches beyond the short-service line. Those are the two great essentials; the method of achieving them is not so easily set forth. I advocate, however, a rather *slow* action of the racquet—as tending to give greater control—though not so slow as to preclude the server's changing his mind at the last moment and serving “high” instead of short. The



Photograph by Millar & Harris

BACKHAND CLEAR

The height at which the stroke is being made should be specially noted; also the turn of the body *away* from the net, and the position of the feet. (See page 21.)

shuttle must be cleanly hit, not pushed or jerked at, and the swing of the racquet should as much as possible resemble the swing taken for a high serve.

There is in Badminton a horrible form of attack known as "rushing the service," which applies only to short serves. It consists in pouncing forward to meet the shuttle and hitting it downwards, or into the server's face, the moment it has crossed the net. It is on this account that, against certain players, the short serve must be so accurate, but it is also on this account that the action of serving should be as uniform as possible. If an opponent is never quite sure which sort of serve is going to be delivered he is more likely to hesitate for a second before attempting to "rush"; and such hesitation is usually more disastrous for him than for the server.

The problem of where to place a low serve will also be dealt with further on. For the present I shall only say, hit the shuttlecock delicately but firmly, try to make it skim the top of the net and fall within a few inches of the short service line, and do not make it obvious that a short serve is going to be delivered. Above all, *practise* serving as carefully as any other stroke in the game.

RECEIVING SERVICE.

The aim of the player receiving service should always be to attack as strongly as possible; if a directly attacking shot is obviated by clever serving, some stroke must be played which may reasonably be expected to lead up to a chance for attack. As has been said, "rushing" is the bugbear of nearly every server, even a really good one, so this form of attack is obviously an

invaluable one to develop. I do not mean that a beginner should attempt to rush the service every time, but he should learn to give himself the chance to do so, and should take every chance that comes.

He must therefore stand, in waiting to be served to, as far forward as possible without putting his foot on the line (which is against the rules, be it observed) and preferably close to the middle line. He should also lean well forward and hold his racquet in a position that will allow of his bringing it very quickly on to the shuttle. His weight should rest on one foot only (whichever he finds it most comfortable and natural to advance) and not more on the heel than is consistent with balance, while little more than the toe of the other foot should be touching the floor. A tall player will find, if he adopts this position, that he has only a very short distance to cover to pounce on a short serve. But two important things must be borne in mind. The first is that it is against the rules to make any move towards the shuttle until it has actually left the server's racquet. The rule is often broken, and generally goes unpenalised (like the overhand service and from the same cause), so that beginners should cultivate a habit of making very sure that they never offend in this respect. To do so is extremely disconcerting to the server, whose difficult task is rendered trebly difficult by any breach of this rule.

The second thing to remember is that the mere fact of a rushing position having been adopted is often enough to make the server change his mind about serving short. It is therefore necessary to ensure that this position will not prevent the player from

getting back quickly to deal with a good length high serve. It is, I think, the fear that they will *not* be quick enough which deters a great many players from ever trying to rush at all. The fear is well grounded, for it is by no means easy to recover from a very forward position if the shuttle goes to the back of the court. It can be done, however, by anyone who is quick on his feet (until age begins to tell, when rushing becomes more dangerous), but the rushing position should always be mentally qualified, as it were, by the possible necessity for running backwards instead of forward.

I say "mentally" qualified, because it is the brain, aided by good foot-work, that to a large extent controls quickness on the court. Thus the anticipation of a shot does not necessarily imply any actual physical movement towards the spot where the shuttle is expected to be; it implies a *mental perception* of what stroke is likely to be played, and an accompanying *readiness of the body* to move in the right direction.

In waiting to receive service, therefore, though it is right to be prepared to rush, the muscles must be so adjusted, the body so balanced and the mind so alert, that if a high serve is delivered at the last moment it will be possible to get back to it without floundering or loss of time. This is a case in which careful study of foot-work will be well rewarded. I therefore repeat, that when intending to rush a short serve it must never be forgotten that the serve may turn out to be a high one after all, and no position of the feet or body must be adopted that will prevent a rapid change of purpose.

Conversely, if a player has made up his mind that he can never learn to rush a service (which would be a great pity, though many good players, especially

women, never do learn) he should not make the mistake of standing too far from the net on that account. I have so far been assuming that the opponent will deliver only a *good* short service; but it is (unfortunately for him) very much on the cards that he will not, and if the player served to is standing more than a foot or so from the service line he may easily waste an excellent chance for an attacking shot. The true rushing of a good serve must occur from somewhere very close to the net, but it is possible to produce nearly the same effect, less ambitiously, from further back, if the serve is a bad one. So no one should ever stand so far back that he is compelled to return even a poor service underhand. That is very bad play.

And here may be emphasised the advisability of always returning the service with a *downward* stroke if it is at all possible. To clear *unnecessarily* is a weakness that should always be avoided; and this remark applies particularly to women, for even some (otherwise) good players are much too prone to adopt defensive methods when there is no occasion for them. There is real occasion often enough, unfortunately, without going out of one's way to imagine one! As will be realised later on, when we come to tactics, clearing shots are by no means used solely for defence. A good clear at the right moment—such as when both opponents have been drawn up to the net, or when one of them is evidently anticipating a drop-shot, etc.—may be an admirable piece of finesse, but, in general, young players should accustom themselves to hitting the shuttle *down* whenever they are in a position to do so. Once more, in passing, I must repeat that attack should always be the first aim and object of every ambitious

player, and except in particular circumstances all upward tending strokes belong to defence rather than to attack. Even drop-shots, it must be remembered, are not, strictly speaking, attacking shots, even when very perfectly played; they may, and often do, win the rally, and often it is not possible to play anything else at the moment, but players should regard them in general as a means to an end rather than an end in themselves. A succession of cleverly placed drop-shots often leads to an opening for a downward shot—often also to the opponent's return drop-shot finding the net—but they are really only part of a *general plan of attack*, and only a few experienced players (who shall be nameless!) indulge in such fancy shots for their own sake.

I mention this here, although it might seem to come rather under the heading of tactics, because inexperienced students of the game might conclude, from watching experts, that I had misled them as to the nature of these fascinating and invaluable shots. But if they watch very carefully they will see that no great player ever wastes a real opportunity for a downward stroke if he is sufficiently near the net to ensure—humanly speaking—its being a winner. Therein lies, in fact, one of the main differences between a good player and a champion.

SECTION III

HOW TO PICK UP SMASHES.

This is an essential feature of defence, and no one can be a first-class player who has not learnt the art to a considerable extent, though of course some experts excel more than others.

It is, I think, generally admitted that it is easier to return smashes with a backhand rather than a forehand action. It seems to be definitely so, at any rate, in the case of women players, who are almost invariably more vulnerable on the *right* side of their bodies, when smashed at really hard. The statement applies less generally to men—indeed, Mr. Mack goes so far as to assert that “most men who have a good defence are equally sound on either side.” But I venture, with all deference, to doubt whether this is quite accurate except in the case of undeniable “cracks” such as himself. It has always appeared to me that the majority of men (and “cracks” are certainly not the majority) have a preference for returning smashes with a backhand action (i.e. with the reverse side of the racquet-face to that employed on the forehand), and that they are rarely as competent in dealing with a smash so directed as to make this action impossible. I have certainly found that the average good player is more vulnerable on his right side—and have sometimes profited by it accordingly.

It is not difficult to understand why the backhand

action is easier for dealing with any smash that does not arrive quite definitely on the right side. If a player adopts the orthodox forehand grip he can demonstrate to himself, even in the absence of a shuttle, that an attempt to take a shot, aimed straight at his body, with the forehand face of his racquet can seldom result in anything but awkwardness and a very limited scope for return. (There are one or two players, notably Mr. R. Du Roveray, who do sometimes adopt this method with good results, but it is usually adopted, I fancy, *faute de mieux*.) But with the backhand action—particularly, in my view, with the backhand grip I have advocated—almost every part of the body can be “covered” with the racquet-face without undue contortions. Moreover, again with due deference to Mr. Mack’s opinion, I believe that all underhand shots—except perhaps drop-shots quite close to the net—are more easily controlled and directed with a backhand action than with the converse. It is undoubtedly so in my own case, and, from observation, I have concluded that it is so with the majority of players.

I would not for a moment suggest, of course, that no attempt should be made to develop the power of returning smashes (or of making any sort of defensive shot) on the forehand. Precisely because it is a spot so often aimed for, every player should try to strengthen his defence in that respect, if it needs strengthening. My contention is only that for defensive play in general it will be found advisable to hold the racquet *across* the body, as if in expectation of the necessity for backhand play. And for those players who do find, with me, a greater difficulty in returning hard smashes on their forehand, I advise that when they are being strongly attacked they should stand a little to the right side of

the line of attack, so as to allow their arm and wrist plenty of room. The closer the shuttle is to the body at the moment of hitting, the harder it is to make an effective return (particularly to get a clear well away), so that the important thing, after learning how best to employ the racquet, is to learn to keep the body out of the way. I think the chief reason why some players are not very good at picking up smashes is that they have never really learnt to do this. There is, of course, not always time to eliminate the body, as it were, and an expert player will often contrive to return the shuttle effectively without having done so to any marked degree—but he will seldom return it quite so well as if he had had more room in which to make his stroke. Therefore, when waiting for a smash the beginner should lean well forward, with bent knees, his racquet held well in front and across his body. In this way there will be a considerable space between body and racquet when the shuttle arrives, and in consequence a better chance of getting some power into his return. The harder the smash, the more this power will be needed in attempting to clear, though it is probably easier to play a good drop-shot off a hard smash than when there is less pace on the shuttle. The *shorter* the smash is likely to be (and a weak clear usually results in a rather short smash), the more the body should be sloped forward and the nearer the racquet should be to the ground. (See Plate VII.) Anyone who has ever watched the play of Mr. Devlin—probably the most astounding “retriever” of smashes the game has ever seen—will have observed that when he is being vigorously attacked, his outstretched racquet and one knee (usually the left) are both almost touching



Photograph by Millar & Harris

FOREHAND (SIDE LINE) DRIVE

This is most easily played off the *right* foot, so that the eye can more accurately gauge the height and direction of the shot. (See page 24.)

the floor. In fact, he has brought the art of "body eliminating" to such perfection that it is very hard indeed to score a point against him by the usually sound enough method of aiming straight at the opponent's chest.

A mistake often made by people who are being smashed at is to hit a little too soon. Naturally when the shuttle is almost out of reach the stroke is frequently made too late, but that is simply a question of reach and not of timing. When the attack is being directed straight *at* the player, it may generally be observed that if he fails to return the shuttle it is because he has hit a trifle too *soon* rather than too late. It is a most common error of timing, and beginners (and others) should remind themselves of it if they find they are not picking up smashes as well as they sometimes do. In a fast game the shuttle certainly travels very rapidly, but often the quickness of the rally deceives the eye, and a determination not to hit too hurriedly will often help the defender to time his return correctly.

The main technical points to remember, therefore, in picking up smashes, are these: the body must be kept well out of the way, by leaning well forward and keeping the racquet well in front, and the shuttle must not be hit too soon. The question of whether to prepare to defend chiefly on the backhand or not must be decided by the player's individual capacity, but I repeat that I believe the backhand action to be both easier and more generally satisfactory in its results. Forehand defence should be practised as well, of course, as it will be very necessary at times.

The discussion of the various shots that may be played in returning smashes must be left to a later section. I am dealing at present with little beyond the more or less technical method of playing each type of shot,

SECTION IV

THE RULES OF THE GAME.

It may be assumed that anyone who has tried to play Badminton at all will have been given a general idea of the rules, but there are a number of these which it is rather easy to break—unconsciously or owing to carelessness or ignorance—and it is advisable that beginners who wish to develop into Tournament players should pay careful attention to what may or may not be done.

To begin with, as has already been emphasised, the server *must* serve strictly underhand; that is, the shuttle, at the moment of being struck, must not be above the player's waist-line. In view of the present style of sporting dress for women, this line is much harder to define than when the rule was first framed! With men, however, there is usually some sort of line of demarcation, and if both men and women adopt, *from the outset*, the style of service I have advocated, there should never be any difficulty in conforming to the rule. A definite underhand action rarely tends to produce a "foul," and if this is adhered to no serve which is not some kind of "freak service" (not to be recommended) is at all likely to be challenged. Players who serve backhand, as is sometimes done—by no one more successfully than Miss Hogarth, who is, on her day, one of the most accurate servers there has ever been—do run some danger in this respect; but it is

not a method at all commonly adopted, and is not in general to be recommended. If a beginner finds that the method suits him, he must be particularly careful not to break the rule. As has been said, owing to the difficulty of detection by umpires, who are not in a good position for judging, the rule is far too often disregarded, and the breach of it is peculiarly disconcerting and annoying to opponents.

Another rule by no means strictly adhered to is that which prohibits rushing the serve too soon, i.e. beginning to *move* before the shuttle has left the server's racquet. The server is admittedly always at some disadvantage in Badminton, and any disregard of this rule adds greatly to his difficulties. Even if this were not so, it may be added, the rule is a rule and is meant to be kept. So that anyone who tries to develop the invaluable art of rushing should make up his mind from the start that he will only do so strictly in conformity with the rules of the game. In receiving service "some part of both feet must be in contact with the floor," and neither foot must leave the floor till the shuttle has been struck.

A similar rule applies to the server himself, though a number of people seem to be unaware of the fact. It is not permitted to "walk" while serving; that is, the server should take up his position before beginning the *action* of serving. The wording of the rule in the Laws of Badminton (Rule 15) is not at present very satisfactory, as it is quite possible to offend in practice without offending against that wording, but I hope that by the time these pages appear some revision may be under consideration. The *intention* of the rule certainly is that the server shall be stationary before beginning to serve, and beginners should bear this well

in mind. It is easy to get into the habit of taking a step forward when hitting the shuttle, and such habits are not always easy to break.

It is against the rules to touch the net or the net-posts with any part of the racquet, dress or person while the shuttle is in play. Even if the shuttle does not pass over the net, or if it falls outside the boundary lines, the net and net-posts must not be touched *at all* by the opposing side until the shuttle has definitely fallen *into* the net or reached the floor. Most players are aware of this rule so far as the net itself is concerned, but quite a number still appear to be ignorant that the net-posts may not be touched either. Players may sometimes be seen clutching at the net-post to preserve their balance after running for a drop-shot, blissfully unaware that they may be penalised for doing so! As the eye of the umpire is obliged to follow the flight of the shuttle, such breaches are not always observed—nor is an umpire always available—so that all sporting players should watch carefully to see that they have not touched or brushed against the net in any way, and should immediately announce the fact—umpire or no umpire—if they know that they have done so.

A minor point to remember is not to put a foot on any line either in serving or in being served to.

It is against the rules to hit the shuttle in returning an opponent's shot, before it has passed completely over the net. The racquet may *follow* the shuttle over the net after it has been struck, as in Lawn-Tennis, but opportunities often present themselves for snapping the shuttle downwards before it has actually passed across the tape, and players must guard against hitting it too soon. There is not always an umpire present to

penalise a breach, and it is difficult for anyone else to do so with authority. Many drop-shots which rise temptingly high in the air would nevertheless pass the tape, if allowed to do so, too closely to be pounced upon, so that great care should be exercised not to score illicitly off what should really have been a difficult shot to return at all.

After a "sitter" has been put up at the net, the racquet must not be waved or brandished close to the net and the opponent's racquet. Since this action tends to distract the opponent's attention it constitutes a baulk, and may be penalised as such, whether the breach is accidental or not.

It is against the rules to hit the shuttle twice or to push or "sling" it over the net. The shuttle must be *cleanly* hit. At the present time a considerable controversy is still raging in regard to this matter, as it is not always at all easy to judge accurately whether a player has offended or not, and opinions differ a good deal as to how best to deal with the problem. A "hit off the wood" is legitimate, but when both wood and strings come into contact with the shuttle, or if both feathers and base strike the strings or the wood, or if the shuttle remains against any part of the racquet for an appreciable moment instead of leaving it sharply and cleanly, a "foul" may be claimed. Owing to the frequent difficulty, mentioned above, of the umpire or any of the players being quite positive whether one of these things has occurred, some people are in favour of having *all* such shots, including wooden hits, penalised. Some contend that they should all be "lets," and some that no attention should be paid to any but flagrant examples such as no one on court

would be prepared to defend. I am myself in favour of the last solution. Badminton is such an extremely fast game, played at its best, that even experts cannot depend on hitting the shuttle perfectly cleanly all the time, and the tendency of some umpires—and players as well—to stop every few rallies with a cry of “double,” is, in my view, detrimental to the interests of the game. Nobody would wish to score with a foul shot, but many shots nowadays are penalised on the faintest of suspicions—indeed, many umpires constantly penalise ordinary wooden shots for fear of allowing a dubious one to pass muster. Personally I feel sure it would be better if all such merely dubious shots were allowed to go unchallenged, for these shots rarely affect the course of a rally—far less so than the average wooden hit; but many experts think otherwise, and at present there is really no unanimity of opinion, and no definite ruling on the subject.

Beginners should try not to get into a habit of carelessness in this direction, and not to offend more than they can possibly help. Taking the eye off the shuttle, hitting too hurriedly or otherwise mistiming, all contribute to double-hits, so that to some extent (but to some extent only) clean hitting is under the player's own control, and it will be to his own interest and the interests of the game in general to avoid double-hits of any kind so far as lies in his power.

There are one or two points I feel constrained to mention here which relate to etiquette rather than to actual rules, but anyone who wishes and hopes to become a regular tournament player will be well advised to give them some attention. They all come under the heading, really, of consideration for one's

opponent, but the neglect of some of them occasionally rounds upon oneself.

Care should be taken not to serve before *both* opponents *and* one's own partner are ready; not to make any undue noise during a rally; not to discard the shuttle unless all are agreed that it should be changed; not to make any alteration in its pace without the same agreement; not to question an opponent's or umpire's decision against oneself; not to try and prejudice an umpire's decision in any way before it is given; not to hit the shuttle along the floor, as it helps to destroy the shuttle and gives the opponent extra trouble; not—in short, not to indulge in any behaviour which one could reasonably resent on the part of one's opponent.

It must be understood that in emphasising the existence of the rules and giving warnings against breaches of etiquette I am not claiming immunity from such breaches on my own part. Every player, good or bad, may inadvertently (or in the heat of the moment) offend against any or all of the rules or points of etiquette I have mentioned, and no sportsman will resent being penalised in the first case, or fail to be sorry in the second. It is only my love of Badminton and my desire that it should be played as well as possible and in the most sporting spirit, from every point of view, that makes me anxious to impress on young players the fact that there are a good many rules which may unintentionally be broken and a number of small ways in which one may make oneself rather tiresome to opponents. To have a thorough knowledge of rules and etiquette from the start, and to have a real wish to conform to them, will at least be of some

assistance to beginners in avoiding offences which are *in the main* due to either carelessness or ignorance. And it would be a poor service to render the game which has given me so much enjoyment for so many years, if I did not—in writing a book for beginners—make some attempt to lessen an undoubted tendency to ignore certain rules, a tendency which, if not checked, can hardly fail to be detrimental to a very fine game.

PART TWO

SECTION I

COMBINATION

GENERAL REMARKS.

The art of combining seems to present special difficulties to the beginner, and even some otherwise first-class players never really understand it as it should be understood. Different partnerships naturally demand different methods of combination, and where a Championship, or the winning of a Club or County or International Match is at stake, players should try to get plenty of practice together beforehand. But this is not always possible, so that the "conventions" of combination should be studied by everyone as soon as the elements of the game have been learnt. The better a player understands what combining really means, the more likely he is to succeed, either with a strange partner or with one to whom he is accustomed. Certain subtleties of combination, such as are evolved by regular partners, will be peculiar to those two and cannot be described or taught, but there are a number of points which may be usefully remembered either by those who frequently play with different partners or who are trying to "work up" a partnership with a particular player.

There are two distinct "formations" in Badminton; one is commonly called "sides," and the other "back-and-front." In the first, each player takes his share of the court, with such modifications as a particular partnership may require; in the second, one player goes to the net as soon as possible and stays there—roughly speaking—till the rally ends. The latter form is quite unsuitable for men's doubles, and a number of experts think it equally so for ladies. Nevertheless certain players have made a success of it (not only in recent years, but in the days of the great Miss Lucas and of Miss Bateman), and the All England Ladies Doubles have been won on five occasions by players adopting it. It is certainly an invaluable method to employ when one player happens to be considerably inferior to her partner. A strong player (even if not a habitual "back-liner") with a comparatively weak partner will always make a far better fight against two fairly good opponents by this means than if they played "sides," for in the latter case it is impossible to prevent the weaker player from being consistently attacked. If she remains at the net the attack is necessarily deflected to a considerable extent, and the control of the rallies is much more in her partner's hands. Indeed, expert back-liners will generally succeed even with quite a poor net-player against any but a more or less first-class couple. So that the formation should by no means—in my opinion—be ruled out of ladies' doubles; and any player who is really quick on her feet and possesses a strong smash and a variety of attacking shots will be well advised to practise it in addition to the orthodox method, owing to its great value in a crisis, such as when no partner

strong enough to play "sides" can be found. The capacity is also highly useful in handicap events, and it is often very helpful to be able to change from "sides" to "back-and-front" for a time when the former is not producing satisfactory results. The change of position is often decidedly disconcerting to opponents, and a few valuable points may be gained at an important stage of the game. A change back again a little later tends to upset the opponents' tactics once more, so that it will be seen how useful it may prove for every first-class player—man *or* woman—to know how to cover the back of the court, if only for a short time. This method of changing about from one formation to the other was often adopted successfully by Mr. Chesterton and myself when things were not going well with us, and it is a "card up the sleeve" that I recommend for ladies' doubles, too.

It may be thought, by readers who know me, that my advocacy of this formation—in the face of many people's prejudice—springs from its being my own favourite method of combination in ladies' doubles. I admit that it *is* my favourite (partly because I have been more successful in that way than in playing "sides"), but I do not think that is the only reason why I put forward its claims. I honestly believe that the *capacity* to adopt it is of great value to women players, even if playing altogether on the back line may only rarely be suitable for them. I admit also that it requires rather special qualifications if it is to be habitually undertaken; among these, as I have said, are speed, strength, and variety of stroke, to say nothing of staying power, which will certainly be needed. But perhaps the chief requisite is the power of *placing*. Since it is imperative (for success) to attack as much as

possible, the back-liner *must* understand how to place her shots in such a way as to put her opponents constantly in difficulties and thereby on the defensive. The use—and the very quick use—of the brain is paramount if a woman is to be successful as an established back-liner against first-class opponents. Speed and skill and stamina, though also essential, will not be enough without a high degree of skill in “generalship” and in the power to adapt the method of attack against individual players. But there is no reason why any quick and clever player should not be able to hold her own on the back line either for a short time against good opponents or throughout a tournament in which the opposition is less strong; and a knowledge of the necessary tactics is certainly likely to benefit any woman in partnership with a player much weaker than herself. She may survive several rounds, if not all, by means of this formation, when playing “sides” would have seen her rapid defeat in the first round. It is for this reason, chiefly, that I advise women not to neglect such a formation altogether in practice games. The trouble expended on it may stand them in good stead one day. A minor point to be remembered, as regards club play, is that an otherwise very unequal four may be transformed into quite an even match by the strongest and the weakest playing “back-and-front” together. Where three players are reluctant to have their game spoilt by the inclusion of a weak fourth, this formation is the best way out of the difficulty.

ORTHODOX DOUBLES.

By these I mean men’s doubles, and ladies’ doubles other than “back-and-front.” The method of combin-



Photograph by Millar & Harris

BACKHAND (SIDE LINE) DRIVE

The backhand grip advocated on page 11 is particularly suited to this type of stroke, owing to its giving greater power and control.

ing should be similar in either case, so that my remarks under this heading will apply to both women and men.

Combination does not merely mean the art of not running into one's partner, not poaching his shots, and not allowing the shuttle to drop untouched between oneself and him. There is much more in it than that, but this elementary art must of course be learnt, and it is the first to which beginners should turn their attention. The word "sides" implies that in such a formation each player must keep to his own side of the court and only deal with the shuttle when it enters his domain. That idea certainly prevailed in earlier days of Badminton, and players were quite vexed if their partners stepped in front of or behind them to play a shot, even if they themselves were very ill-situated for dealing with it! I think I am right in saying that Mr. F. Chesterton—that great master of the game—was the first to see the fallacy of adhering rigidly to a particular court; and, more hesitatingly, I hazard the statement that he and I were the first couple to exploit the special form of combination which nowadays goes by the name of "sides." That name is now rather a misnomer, and merely survives as a handy term to use in contradistinction to "back-and-front." The distinction is that in the latter form one player (*not* interchangeably) is—or should be—*always* guarding the net. In the former, either partner may be anywhere at any time and for any length of time suitable to the purpose of the moment. Thus when Mr. Chesterton and I first came to the front as a pair playing in this novel way our opponents sometimes found it decidedly difficult to adapt themselves to our method, for they never knew whether to expect me or my partner to be at the net or

on the back line. Indeed, until the great partnership of the present day between Miss Elton and Mr. F. Hodge, I should say that no player in mixed doubles ever left so much of the back line to be covered by his partner as Mr. Chesterton did when playing with me. Nowadays such a position in court is more often seen, and in the partnership mentioned above Miss Elton often takes a very large share of work on the back line while her partner rushes the "sitters," and deals with the net shots. This partial reversal of the more usual method in mixed doubles is not to be recommended for general use, unless the woman partner is as exceptionally strong in smashing and in defence as Miss Elton, but that question will be fully dealt with in its proper place.

In ordinary mens' or ladies' doubles the partners should stand more or less side by side when serving or receiving service. If a serve is returned high up on the middle line the player in the *left* court should be allowed to deal with it (supposing both to be right-handed players). If a drop-shot is returned towards the middle line I consider that the *right-court* player should take it, unless it is a weak shot that presents the chance for a "rush," in which case his partner should do so as he can use his forehand. Of course where partners know each other's play it is often arranged that the server will "follow up" his own short service, in which case his partner will drop back at once to cover him. But for the purpose of beginners it is safe to say that, in general—where the partners are in normal position—shots anywhere in the vicinity of the middle line should be taken by the left-court player when they are *high* and by his partner when they are

low. It is obvious that attacking shots (except from quite close to the net) must be played on the forehand, and by the partner who will leave less space exposed by dealing with them in that way. Thus, if the right-court player steps far enough towards the middle to be able to smash on his forehand from the middle line he may sometimes be rather out of position for a quick return down his own boundary line, and his partner will seldom have either time or room to cross in front to help him. I am speaking here only for the benefit of comparative beginners; experts—such as Mr. H. S. Uber and others—habitually move towards the middle to bring off their devastating “round the head” smashes in the right court. But, being experts, they understand how to protect themselves against disaster, and even so I venture to say that I have known disaster attend their reluctance to leave such shots to the left-court player! No absolute rule can possibly be laid down for every stroke—and experts are laws unto themselves—but for beginners I do strongly advise that the majority of high shots on the middle line (or a foot or so to the right of it) should be taken by the player in the left court. Every chance for attack, in short, should be seized by *whichever player can most easily deal with it on his forehand*—unless he happens to be far back in the court and a “sitter” arrives which can be snapped down backhanded by his partner. Similarly I believe that middle line *underhand* shots can best be dealt with (backhand) by the right-court player. The middle line is an area which perhaps confuses the beginner more than any other in regard to the taking or leaving of shots, and I believe that when both partners are more or less in line my suggestions for guiding their

decision will (in general) produce satisfactory results. So much always depends on circumstance in the province of combination that its rules must constantly be governed by circumstance and nothing else, but beginners will accustom themselves by degrees to adapt their methods to the requirements of each case. Much can also be learnt as to combination by the study of a first-class pair. It will often be realised, then, why certain shots which the uninitiated might normally expect one player to take, are taken by his partner, *and vice versa*. To know just *when* to break a convention of combination is the sign of a first-class (or potentially first-class) player.

Properly to cover the court when on the attack, one player should generally be advancing and one dropping back. This will not and need not always be the case, of course; indeed, when the right-court player is smashing from half-way down the court his partner should be more chary of advancing, as a well-directed clear to the left corner might put both of them at a disadvantage and perhaps convert attack into defence. But when the left-court player is in charge of the attack his partner may confidently edge forward in the hope of loose returns near the net, for should a clear be directed to the *right* corner the left-court player can cross and deal with it on his forehand without special difficulty. A point I want to emphasise is the importance of leaving such shots to be dealt with by the left-court player unless his partner can reach them *comfortably*. It is a great mistake, and a common one among beginners, for a player who has been drawn to the net to retreat from it too rapidly (unless his partner is *not* in a position to cover him). In this scrambling

retreat it very often happens either that a drop-shot arrives which he could have pounced upon if he had been near enough, or that he is in an awkward position for dealing with a shot going over his head. He should therefore learn to linger within easy reach of the net, once he has advanced to it, and to cross the court and drop back on the other side if the shuttle goes over his head. Seeing him near the net, his partner will (or should) be ready to deal with a good length clear in the other court. If the clear is *not* a good length and the player near the net feels he can get back in time to make an attacking shot, there is no harm in his doing so; but what I particularly want to warn beginners against is their habit of always hurrying backwards immediately after playing a shot near the net. This applies especially to the right-court player, as I have already said, but even if the position is reversed it is not good policy to retreat at once from the net unless the shuttle can obviously be reached soon enough to deal with it effectively.

It is not easy to make this point quite clear, for I do not wish to suggest that a player should *never* step back to smash after having gone to the net. That would convey quite a wrong impression. Perhaps it will be more comprehensible and useful to say that when he has reached a drop-shot only just in time, and his body therefore still has a forward impetus, it is usually wiser to let that impetus carry him *across* the court rather than to try and check and reverse it by plunging back. The check and reverse, if he has been running really fast, are apt to produce a plunge rather than an easy retreat, and therefore to militate against his making an effective attacking shot. Whereas his partner, who

has not just been chasing a drop-shot or a "sitter," will be obviously better placed and better balanced just then for returning a high shot. A further point to be noted is that if a player consistently moves backwards after taking a drop-shot it is a great encouragement to his opponents to play another drop, which he will then have to advance again to reach instead of being ready at the net to "pounce" if the chance occurs. The chief object of dropping, as we shall see later, is to compel an upward rather than a downward shot from the other side, so that there is nothing a good "dropper" dislikes more than to find someone always hovering at or near the net, for his accuracy is impaired by the fear of his shot's being pounced on; he is therefore often intimidated into changing his tactics.

This is a fact seldom sufficiently grasped by young players and one they should give careful attention to. I think their reluctance to remain near the net (noticeable also in quite good players) springs from the fear of not being able to reach a high shot in time to make a good return; but if they will realise that, as I have explained, it ought to be safe to leave such high shots to their partners, perhaps the fear and the reluctance will be overcome. Pouncing upon short shots at the net is so invaluable a habit that risks may legitimately be taken to achieve it, and in almost every really first-class combination it may be observed that one partner or the other is either never very far from the net or else is constantly edging towards it while his partner is attacking; and almost every expert "follows up" his own drop-shot, from right to left or conversely, instead of retreating at once and leaving a cross drop-shot to his partner.

It must be understood that the foregoing remarks apply to players who are on the attack. When they are defending they should both be about half-way down the court, and it would of course be fatal, as a rule, to remain at or advance to the net after making a defensive clear; though on occasion, when the clear is so well-placed and of such good length that the opponent is obviously not in a position to smash, it is often very good policy for the striker or his partner to go to the net in anticipation of a drop-shot.

Perhaps I might epitomise these fairly elementary suggestions as follows:

Partners should stand more or less level in court when serving or receiving service, unless otherwise by arrangement or when either or both adopt a very forward position for the purpose of rushing the serve. In the latter case the partner will be a few feet farther back.

High shots near the middle line should usually be taken by the left-court player; low shots in the same area by his partner.

While defending, both partners should be somewhere in the middle of their service courts. When attacking, one of the two—preferably the right-court player—should be either edging towards the net or *mentally prepared* to go there at any moment. If he runs in front of his partner he should retreat down the same side of the court and not hurry back to his original side, for his partner—seeing him cross in front—should have crossed at the same time into the other court.

After a drop-shot has been executed, by either partner from either court, if the next shot is a drop it should usually be taken by the same player, even if at

the further end of the net. Valuable time will be wasted in getting onto the shuttle if the first striker retreats and leaves his partner to advance for a drop-shot on his own side. This constant changing of courts not only tends to upset the opponents' schemes, but it ensures (if properly carried out) that the shuttle will generally be returned by the partner who is in the best position for hitting it—a result which is really the essence of good combination. It should always be remembered that it doesn't matter at all whether a shot is, technically speaking, Brown's or Robinson's; the important thing is that the player who can deal with it most advantageously (which means most "offensively") should be the one to do so. This should be well laid to heart.

In passing, though this should rightly come under the heading of Tactics, I strongly advise that when one player has been drawn to the net, the other should *always*, if possible, play a *downward stroke* of some kind, partly in the hope of making an opening at the net and partly because defensive shots should be avoided as much as possible when the striker and his partner are not in position for defence. Circumstances naturally alter cases, but when one player is at the net and one at the back of the court, a clear—unless a very clever one—is about the worst shot that can be played. (This does not apply, of course, to the genuine back-and-front formation.)

I ought also to mention that when one partner is engaged either in attack or defence it is not wise to interrupt him. His partner should be ready to help when required, but he should not often attempt to intervene. When the shuttle does come to him he should always *continue* the attack if he possibly can, so

that previous efforts in that direction shall not be thrown away. If his partner is being strongly attacked, he should not edge closer to try and help, for he is more likely only to get in the way; he should guard his own side line and be on the alert for sudden drop-shots, which the besieged player will be less ready to take.

It must of course be recognised that none of my directions are to be taken as rules. No absolute rules exist in the department of combination; I only put forward these suggestions as a general indication of the most likely way to produce a satisfactory partnership. When two players have played together habitually for any length of time they will doubtless evolve the system of play best suited to their individual requirements.

One other thing should be suggested. When one partner is superior to the other in any special department, such as smashing or drop-shots, he should be allowed as far as possible to deal with such shots. Similarly, if one player is rather weak from the left-hand corner he should always try to cross as soon as he can into the right court, where his weakness will be much less exposed to attack, since his backhand overhead shots can then be taken by his partner. Many players never remember to take this precaution—to the delight and profit of their opponents.

MIXED DOUBLES (“SIDES”)

Many of the points I have tried to explain with regard to combining in men's and ladies' doubles apply to the “sides” formation in mixed doubles as well. But some of them require to be amplified or modified, owing to the fact that, other things being equal, the man will be the more forceful player, and he and his partner

must so contrive that the lion's share of attacking-shots shall fall to him. What I have already said, therefore, with regard to leaving most of the smashing to whichever partner can hit the harder, must now be read as an indication that, when *convenient*, the woman should try to eliminate herself to some degree, so that the attack may be undertaken by her partner; she must hold herself in readiness to supplement it when required, and more especially to end it by scoring at or near the net. On the other hand, when the man is *not* in a position to deal effectively with a high shot, it is a mistake for him to insist on doing so, and he should allow his partner to begin or continue the attack—or sometimes merely to defend—till he has recovered his position. Even good men players are too little disposed to trust their partners in this respect—capable though many women are of smashing really well—and the rally often ends badly as a result of the man's self-assertion at the *wrong moment*. The boot is sometimes on the other leg, however, especially where beginners or mediocre players are concerned, and a woman *must* learn the art of self-elimination in mixed doubles, particularly as regards attack. If she does not, she will find not only that some opportunities of a winning shot have been thrown away, but that she is getting much more than her rightful share of the game, and thereby inevitably lessening her side's chance of success. Her "rightful share" in mixed doubles is the *smaller* share, and no amount of Women's Suffrage can alter this fact.

I remember a particular and outstanding instance of the ill-results of a lack of self-elimination where an otherwise first-class woman player was concerned.

Her opponents were Miss Hogarth and the famous Dr. H. N. Marrett, who were playing back-and-front. She was herself a remarkably good player, and her partner was a well-known champion, but owing to her rigid adherence to her own court—up and down which she worked most assiduously and with amazing steadiness—the game practically resolved itself into a single between her and Dr. Marrett, and the match could only end in one way. I quote this instance to impress upon women the necessity for a constant change of court in order to divert the attack from themselves. I also strongly advise every woman to develop some degree of proficiency in net-play, for it is a tremendous help to her partner if she can cover the net adequately now and then for a little while. Moreover, a change of tactics—as I pointed out in relation to net-play in ladies' doubles—often means the converting of probable defeat into victory. The ability to play at the net when circumstances demand it is, therefore, of the highest value to women players.

The advisability of leaving high shots near the middle line to the left-court player is naturally much increased when women are in the right court, particularly as they seldom employ a "round the head" smash, and must therefore move considerably out of position to smash such shots at all, while it will obviously weaken the chance of attack if they take them backhand. When they are in the left court, however, I believe in their being allowed to take plenty of high shots on the middle line, and I do not believe in their being hustled out of the way by their partners, except perhaps where such experts as Mr. Uber and others are concerned. The average man usually trusts his partner too little in

be played by the woman, but at the same time if the man finds himself drawn to the net he should follow up his own shots just as he would in a men's double. If his partner is really not to be trusted to cover him for a few moments, she is not fitted to play sides at all. Nevertheless, in many cases where she is eminently so fitted, her partner is still unreasonably reluctant to stay near the net for more than one stroke, with the result that he comes scrambling back in disorder to take a shot for which she is far better prepared. The two of them will then perhaps be more or less crowded together on one part of the court while the shuttle, returning, travels unmolested to another.

While not wishing to insist too much upon Women's Rights, I am inclined to believe that bad combination in mixed doubles is rather more often attributable to men than to their partners. I hasten to add that women are frequently culpable also, through not permitting men their rightful share of the attack; but I think that the man's idea of what *is* his rightful share is often a wrong one. My earlier reference to "the essence of good combination" (i.e. that the shuttle should be struck by the player who is in the best position to do so) applies equally to mixed doubles, with the additional clause, in regard to these, that it is the woman's duty to see that her partner rather than herself should be in the "best position" for delivering most of the attacking shots. Exceptions to this rule—exemplified in such partnerships as that of Miss Elton and Mr. Hodge—make no difference to the wisdom of its general application.

62 MIXED DOUBLES (BACK AND FRONT)

MIXED DOUBLES ("BACK-AND-FRONT").

I regard this formation as the one that involves the least difficulty for the man and the greatest for the woman. The statement may surprise some of my readers, to whom it may appear that to cover the back line is a tremendous feat, and to stand out of the way at the net (hitting down the "plums") quite a simple affair. But I feel that I may perhaps speak with more authority on the subject than almost anyone else; for I have played and won championships as a back-liner in ladies' doubles, and as both a net-player and sides player in mixed, which is a rather rare combination of capacities. My first doubles championship was gained as a net-player in 1908, my last (at the time of writing) as a net-player in 1926; between those dates I have won and lost many matches, playing sides and on the back line, and I know very well which *I* find the easiest and which the hardest of the three varieties.

The back-liner has the immense advantage of having the control and direction of the game (on his side of the net) in his own hands. He knows approximately where his partner will be all the time, and during the greater part of each rally she is in front of him, so that, being able to see what stroke she plays, he can more easily anticipate its return. He knows also that unless he can force his opponents to send the shuttle to her at the net it will generally be sent into some part of his own domain. His share in the battle is consequently simplified so far as one part of his mind is concerned, for his attention is not distracted by the ordinary indecisions of combination and the doubt as to what kind of shot his partner is going to play or has played while his back was turned. He is therefore

free to concentrate on his own scheme of attack, which it is his partner's duty to support.

The net-player possesses none of these advantages. During most of the game she is crouching near the net, not always knowing exactly where her partner is, nor what stroke he has played till the shuttle is over the net. Yet the responsibility of finishing off the rally is usually hers rather more often than his; the responsibility is hers of deciding whether to hit or leave a shuttle passing over her head or down the right or left lines; the responsibility is hers of helping his judgment in the matter of leaving the shuttle on any line. In addition to all this mental strain she must strain every nerve to avail herself of the openings he secures for her at the net—*not* to confuse him by trying to take the wrong shots, *not* to get in his way by going too far back or standing too upright or trying to intercept smashes which he can reach, yet *not* to leave those he can't reach——! In short, the life of a net-player is very far from being the easy and comfortable thing some novices might imagine it to be.

She must go up to the net as soon as possible after her side has served or received service. The precise moment for doing so is not easy to determine either in theory or practice. Some back-liners like their partners to go straight to the net at all costs; some prefer that they should wait until the progress of the rally offers a suitable opportunity. Personally I like my net-partners to adopt the latter method (unless she is serving), for I am not quick enough to cover the back of the court until I have established myself in position. But this is a matter which must always be decided by the individual back-liner. If the net-player is asked

64 MIXED DOUBLES (BACK AND FRONT)

to wait for an opportunity, the best moment for her to advance is usually when she or her partner has played an attacking shot of some kind. When playing at the net myself I find it almost a physical impossibility to go straight to the net when my partner has delivered a high serve; it always seems to my prejudiced and obstinate mind a sort of madness! Yet when playing with Mr. Devlin I am expected to do so—though I cannot help feeling that with any other partner it *would* be sheer madness. However, if a back-liner finds that even after his own high service he can pick up a smash anywhere in court, he is entitled to send his partner to the net the moment he has served. Personally, setting aside the habits of super-men such as Mr. Devlin, I would not recommend this method to the average back-and-front pair. Mr. Mack does recommend it, but with the greatest respect for his judgment I feel that he has not yet figured prominently enough as a back-liner to be accepted as the highest authority, whereas Sir George Thomas, who was at one time almost invincible in this formation, favours the “waiting” game. Certainly if the net-player is a *more than* comparatively weaker player she should get out of the way as soon as the serve is delivered, but I am dealing here with the general practice to be observed by couples who are, or hope to be, a regular pair.

Having arrived at the net, by whichever means is decided upon, her troubles have only just begun. It is impossible to state precisely which shots she should take or leave, for a good deal depends—in this respect also—upon her individual partner. But in general it may be said that she should stand on or inside the

short-service line (again rather according to her partner's wishes), and that she should not attempt any shot which she must *jump* to reach, nor any that is travelling past her on the side lines at any considerable pace. Her partner should normally be able to deal with such shots more effectively than she can, and must therefore be allowed to do so. Of course every net-player will have her own idiosyncrasies in such matters, so that I must repeat that these are only generalisations and finger-posts for ordinary guidance.

The things she must concentrate upon are: serving really well; returning the service in such a way that her opponents cannot attack strongly at once (which means by a *downward* stroke whenever possible); and (above all) making the most of her openings at the net when her partner has worked up to a chance for her to score. In fact it may be said that the first duty of a net-player is not to waste such opportunities—though naturally net-players are human, like everyone else, and must be expected to err.

I am not offering here any suggestions as to tactics beyond those which are involved in the theory of back-and-front combination, so far as the net-player is concerned. Tactics in general will be gone into in a later section. I only wish to try and explain what *manner of shot* will best contribute to the net-player's proper combination with her partner. His "job," as I have said, is much more clearly defined, for he has only to take every shot—if he can!—that she leaves to him; so that the onus of good combination rests almost entirely upon her. And, as I began by saying, it is in my view the heaviest burden that can lie upon a Badminton player.

SECTION II

SINGLES

This branch of Badminton, whether or no a player aspires to the winning of singles championships, is an invaluable means of improving his all-round play. I therefore recommend both men and women—perhaps more especially women—to practise singles whenever a court and an opponent are available. Not only will their speed be increased by the necessity for much running about the court, but they will find that sooner or later they are compelled to make and to take practically every variety of shot known to the game. In doubles this is not always the case, particularly for women, for players get into a bad habit of leaving their weaknesses to be protected by their partners—a method which is well enough when victory is an important matter, but deplorable in practice games. In singles, whether practice or otherwise, there is no partner to help one out, and the player must deal with every situation and every kind of shot as best he may. The patient practising of singles, therefore, even if he has not the stamina to make tournament play worth while, will be of the utmost advantage to him when he returns to the doubles game.

The tactics best suited to a single are not necessarily suited to a double, and *vice versa*; for where, in the latter, constant attack is half or more than half the

battle, in the former much more patience is required. The chance for attack must be more carefully angled for, since there is no partner to cover any risks the player may take. Nevertheless, attack—that is, the chance for making a winning stroke—must be his ultimate aim, unless playing (in a competition) against someone who, given rope enough, may be trusted to hang himself.

Smashing is usually a waste of energy except where there is a reasonable chance of scoring outright. When an opponent is consistently serving a bad length, for instance, a good smash may achieve good results, either at once or very soon, especially if the player can find the weakest spot in the other's defence. But in dealing with a really good length service smashing is to be avoided, for the striker is likely to find himself out of position or off his balance for a quick return. He should therefore try to place the shuttle in the spot least convenient to his opponent, so that he may recover his own position—which should be somewhere about the middle of the court. In dealing with a short serve (rushing should be indulged in only rarely, as it involves too great a risk) he can reply with a drop-shot or else with a clear or drive to the right or left-hand corner according to whichever seems least agreeable to the individual opponent. His chief aim should be to make that opponent's life miserable by feeding him with the shots he likes least, so that sound placing is the pre-eminent qualification for successful singles play.

The actual conduct of the rallies depends so much on circumstance and individuality that no precise instruction can be given—though different lines upon which they may be carried out might be suggested if I were

writing here for the advanced player. But I am at present giving only a bare outline of the requirements for singles play and of what it is wise or unwise to attempt. The more advanced student of the game should study the advice of Sir George Thomas and Mr. Mack, whose books on Badminton deal with singles in detail. But I might suitably remind the beginner that the more pace there is on his own attacking shot the quicker will be the shuttle's return (if it returns at all), so that if he plays an attacking shot from an ill-advised position (one from which he cannot easily recover) he will probably be beaten by a well placed return, either immediately or very soon. He should therefore try to be clearly aware of the *impetus* of his body at the moment of hitting the shuttle, and so place his shot that the impetus will not need to be too violently checked and wrenched out of its course in dealing with the return. This is naturally not always possible, but the idea is worth bearing in mind. It is not merely running about the court that wears a player out; it is the constant necessity for this resistance to the natural impetus and the forcing of the body in an opposite direction. To try and realise just what that impetus is and to place his stroke, if possible, so that its probable return will not involve too much dislocation of his muscles, will help the player to save his breath and so spare him a certain amount of unnecessary physical distress.

SECTION III

VARIETIES OF SERVICE AND OF STROKES IN GENERAL.

In an earlier section I dealt briefly with the elements of serving. To those elements, rightly developed, every good server is indebted, but he will have experimented much and learnt much on his road from ignorance to excellence. He will also perhaps have discovered something new; for the art of Badminton is still in a more or less fluid state, and novel strokes and methods of producing them can still be devised from time to time. It is, indeed, one of the fascinations of the game that the whole gamut of strokes which could conceivably be played is probably not nearly exhausted yet—though it grows a little harder with every season to think of a shot that has never been tried before. Mr. Chesterton used to complain, “The trouble is, one always has to be inventing new shots—one gets tired of the old ones!” But though he undoubtedly “invented” a number of shots that are played as a matter of course to-day, if he were still playing he would probably still be pursuing and finding some new and subtle stroke to astonish and delight the beholders.

In the domain of serving he was exceptionally subtle, and was once responsible for a most remarkable feat, such as I have never seen equalled. In a London League match at the Logan Club he and I were about to

play a pair at whose hands, on their own courts, we had recently suffered a defeat. Mr. Chesterton whispered to me, "We'll show 'em!" and proceeded to the delivery of a series of more astonishingly clever serves than any I have seen. I don't remember whether it was in the first or second sett, but, to the best of my recollection, all I had to do during the *whole* of one game was to walk from one half-court to the other while my partner served; he served without a break right up to 15-0, and I *think* I am right in saying that the shuttle was never once returned over the net! This, moreover, against a couple strong enough at that time to give most players a good game—one of the two, incidentally, possessing a very hard smash. Just *how* Mr. Chesterton obtained this astounding result I cannot say, but it was with a combination of placing, variation, adaptation to the individual, and general deceptiveness such as—I must repeat—I have never witnessed before or since. Such a performance at lawn-tennis would be a very different matter, but in a game in which the server is normally at a disadvantage, it seemed little short of a miracle and our dazed opponents could only take refuge in laughter.

Variation is a thing greatly to be aimed for in serving, since the knowledge of what kind of serve to expect is naturally very helpful to the receiver. A man who, standing very far forward in the hope of rushing, has once or twice been "caught" with a good length high serve, may be more chary thereafter of taking up quite such a forward position; a short serve can then be indulged in with less risk. Similarly the server who almost always serves high—not trusting his powers for any other kind—will find that he can safely (against most opponents) try a short one now and then, for the



Photograph by Millar & Harris

PICKING UP A SMASH

This illustrates the space between body and racquet which is needed for the making of an effective return. (See page 36.) Note *backhand* action.

receiver will probably be waiting a foot or two behind the service line in anticipation of the "usual." Players will naturally learn these things for themselves as they advance in proficiency, but a few hints—including the *reason* for doing this or that—may help them to arrive at proficiency a little sooner than if they had had no preliminary guidance.

Placing the service must always remain largely dependent upon circumstances, i.e., the individual opponent and the special weaknesses or strong points of the server and his partner. The latter should always be taken into account when serving. If a net-player is more than ordinarily weak at picking up smashes (and it is usually not a net-player's strong point) her partner should avoid high serves as much as possible unless he knows she will be going to the net at once. In ordinary doubles the server must remember whether he and his partner are relatively weak or strong in returning smashes at certain angles, and place his high serves as much as possible in accordance with his knowledge. And so on.

In general, it is a good plan, when serving "high," to aim for the angle of the long-service and middle lines from the right court, and for the outer service corner from the left court. But when an opponent is addicted to "smashing round his head" a high serve on the outer line is often useful in the right court as well, for players who favour that type of smash are usually not quite so effective when a different angle is required. In such cases the server's partner must give special attention to guarding his own side line. The most likely angle of a smash should always be taken into account (when serving or at any time); for instance,

after the type of service just suggested, the most obvious spot for the striker to aim for will be straight down his own boundary line. But from the *left* court a smash is more rarely placed down the corresponding side line; it is a less natural angle (especially for "round the head" smashing) and a middle or cross-court smash may more reasonably be anticipated. Indeed, it might profitably be remembered that "round the head" smashes usually tend to be pulled slightly *across* the court from left to right, so that the striker's position should be duly noted by his opponent.

These observations, I must repeat, are all mere indications; no one can say with exactitude where any player is going to return the shuttle after any kind of shot. But probabilities are well worth considering, for it is usually only the first-class player whose shots upset clever anticipation. To be a first-class player, in fact, demands this capacity to "anticipate anticipation" (as it has been aptly expressed), except in a few cases where great force and steadiness to some extent balance a lack of finesse. And the importance of trying to anticipate the probable angle of a shot is demonstrated by the advantage left-handed players possess, for in their case the natural angle is reversed, and the opponent's mind cannot always adjust itself in time.

For short services, where "rushing" is likely to be employed (and it should always be noted whether particular opponents are given to the habit), the main consideration must always be to keep the shuttle very close to the net; but variation in placing is also useful. A pronouncedly "cross" short serve is perhaps more difficult to rush than a more or less straight one, but it is also usually more difficult to achieve.

Another form of service which some people employ successfully, though I have never succeeded with it myself, is a quick *driving* serve down the middle line from the right court. Care must be taken with the angle, for if the receiver can reach the shuttle while it is still rising it will be little better than a weak short serve. The outer line (a little further back than usual) is therefore the best position for delivery, for the shuttle will thus not pass into the receiver's court till it is near the long-service line. The object of this kind of serve is to make the shuttle reach the opponent's backhand at too low a point for him to smash either round the head or by stepping to the left—in fact, to force him to play it backhand and therefore to some extent defensively. It is not an easy serve, but it is certainly a most useful one to know how to deliver against hard hitters. It is a mistake, in any case, to concentrate so exclusively upon one kind of service that it may almost always be confidently anticipated. Variety and finesse are the special attributes of nearly every really high-class Badminton player, and these can be demonstrated in the service as much as during the game itself.

I have already outlined the four staple strokes in Badminton—the smash, the drop, the drive, and the clear. But all of these are capable of surprising variations in the hands of an expert. The smash may be straight or cross-court and may be played at the obvious angle or the reverse. That is, a player may by the position of his body and racquet and the direction in which he is moving, *suggest* that his smash will be, say, from right to left; but by a turn of his body and wrist (or only of his wrist) at the last moment he may

achieve either a straight or a left-to-right cross-smash. Similarly, in running from left to right, the natural angle of his smash will usually be more or less straight down his opponents' left court; but again by a turn of body or wrist (or both) he may pull the shuttle across into the right court.

He may also, with a slight checking motion, convert the anticipated hard smash into merely a sharp downward stroke which takes his opponent unawares owing to the alteration in pace; or by an exaggerated checking motion the expected smash may be transformed into a drop-shot. This variation is known as a "feint," and is most baulking to opponents who are "gathered up," as it were, to defend a hard smash and are therefore unable to force themselves forward in time to reach a drop. Players such as Sir George Thomas (and, pre-eminently, Mr. Chesterton in the past) carry finesse to the extreme of "pretending to pretend," but this demands a very high degree of skill in execution and a very complete control over the shuttle.

A clear may be played slowly or quickly, and may be a high clear or a driving clear. The latter is often used as a species of attacking shot at moments when the opposing players are out of position, and it must be kept comparatively low to achieve its purpose. That purpose is to take advantage of the opponents' awkward situation, from which a high clear would give them time to extricate themselves; but though in such cases it is not played defensively, care must be taken not to employ this shot—however inviting—when a more forcibly attacking one can be used equally well. Subtlety for its own sake should never be allowed to over-rule common-sense, and when two chances of scoring

present themselves, that which offers the *greater certainty* should always be seized.

The ordinary clear, played slowly or quickly, is generally defensive, and should therefore be of a good height and length. It is more difficult to deal effectively with the shuttle after it has fallen some distance than when it has not quite finished its upward flight, so that all defensive clears should be so placed that the shuttle is out of reach until after it has begun to fall.

A point very often neglected when trying to clear from a drop-shot quite close to the net, is that this kind of stroke must be played with a comparatively slow action. If the shuttle is hit too quickly and sharply in an upward direction from that position it nearly always finds the net. I am afraid I can offer no explanation of this fact, though the more scientifically-minded could perhaps do so. The cause is to be found in the special flight of a shuttlecock, which is peculiar to itself; but setting aside scientific reasons, twenty-five years of experience and observation have taught me that when the shuttle is close to the net and about a foot below the tape, it will not go over if it is hit hard. I have often watched even experienced players attempt to return drop-shots in such a way, without sharing in their surprise at the result.

To the various kinds of drop-shot that may be executed there is really no limit so far known to Badminton players. Every player, beginner or expert, will play such shots just a little differently from everyone else, and the result—apart from individual cleverness and subtlety—will always be just a little different also. So that probably no two drop-shots will ever be precisely alike.

They are probably the most fascinating strokes in the game, both to play and to watch, but beginners are warned against developing too great a fondness for them, particularly in early days, for they are always to some extent perilous, and should generally be used—as I mentioned in the first instance—as a means to an end rather than as an end in themselves. Certainly opportunities will often present themselves of scoring with a clever drop-shot, and often there is no alternative in returning the shuttle, but when a more definitely attacking shot is possible the latter ought to be employed.

In ordinary doubles the majority of drop-shots are executed from a position near the net. They may be straight or cross-court, fore or backhand, and perhaps the most attractive to witness are those played backhand along the net from left to right. To many players these are the most difficult to execute, but for my own part I find them the easiest—not necessarily to succeed with but to play—for though they demand accuracy they hardly demand the same *perfect* accuracy as does a drop-shot returned straight back to an opponent waiting greedily just the other side of the net. The latter type requires a steadiness of hand, eye and nerve to which I am rarely equal; whereas if the shuttle travels along the net the opponent has to travel across the court to reach it, so that his margin for error seems to me to be wider. Of course a quick opponent will be able to leap on to such a shot if it is not executed with considerable skill—hence its danger. Yet it always seems to me that it is less nerve-racking (and therefore a trifle easier) to place the shuttle where the opponent is *not* rather than where he very much is; but this may be an idiosyncrasy of my

own, so I must not stress the point. I have often been chidden for indulging in cross-court drop-shots instead of the so-called "easier" straight variety, but my apparently wicked indulgence genuinely springs from the fact that they actually come more easily and naturally to me than other kinds, and I employ them as much from a lack of nerve for attempting "straight" ones as from any other motive. I only elaborate this point to show that it may be wiser to play the shots which do come naturally to the individual player, provided they are not too often punished, rather than to attempt (against the grain) the sort that the majority happen to find less difficult. All kinds, however, should be duly practised, for the sake of variety, which is so greatly to be desired.

Overhead forehand drop-shots should not be indulged in too often except by back-liners and (more rarely) their partners at the net. Any shot near the net that can be *hit down hard* should be so treated in nine cases out of ten, but occasions sometimes arise when the net-player's balance will not permit of her hitting hard, or when the shuttle is at a debatable height for smashing, in both which cases a drop-shot may be employed instead. Also, if both opponents happen to be on the back line, an overhead drop-shot may sometimes be profitably used if a really *short* smash cannot be achieved, for the opponents will have more court to cover before reaching it than if the shuttle had been smashed *towards* them. But these are matters which cannot be legislated for, and the safest rule for net-players in general is to hit down and hit hard whenever they conveniently can.

For the back-liner there is a much wider choice. It is not at all necessary, for the purpose of his scheme, that

every shot which can be taken overhand should be hit hard. There are many ways of working up to a winning shot when one has charge of matters oneself, and overhand drop-shots may often be most usefully employed, particularly on the backhand. Smashing on the backhand is rarely to be recommended, the result seldom being commensurate with the effort expended, except when quite close to the net, when little but the wrist need be used. Backhand overhead drop-shots are often invaluable, therefore, as a means of preserving or opening the attack, for, if successful, the shuttle must be hit upwards by the opposing side. These shots may be played either straight or across court and are a very helpful alternative to clearing; indeed the action, till the moment of hitting, usually so closely resembles that of clearing that the shot is difficult to anticipate correctly. It is hard to understand why comparatively few players employ the cross-court variety, for it does not present any very special difficulties; accuracy and a strong and supple wrist are the chief qualifications required, yet many players possess all these and still neglect to attempt it. It is one of Mr. Mack's most beautiful and characteristic strokes, but I cannot recollect any other player who indulges in it at all habitually except myself, though Sir George Thomas and Mr. Hawthorn—perhaps the finest “droppers” now playing—both use it now and then.

Underhand drop-shots from the middle or back of the court are perhaps more dangerous than any other kind, for they have to be very accurate to escape the penalty of being hit down at the net, the opponent necessarily having a margin of time in which to anticipate them, since the shuttle travels comparatively slowly. Overhead drop-shots are less easy to treat in this way, for the

shuttle is falling instead of rising, and it is more difficult to judge correctly the precise moment at which it has actually crossed the tape. But underhand shots of this nature require to pass the tape by only the narrowest margin if they are not to be fatally pounced upon. Nevertheless, played at the *right* moment—especially by back-liners against a sides combination—they may be highly valuable, for defence is often converted into attack by this means. At the risk of unduly labouring the point, I must again remind beginners that to gain and keep the attack is the supreme purpose in Badminton and every stroke must be studied in relation to its bearing upon that fact.

Every kind of drop-shot ought, roughly speaking, to be avoided when playing against a back-and-front pair, except at moments when the net-player has been driven away from the net or right onto one of the boundary lines. In the latter case a cross drop is quite likely to score, if properly executed and if played from *near* the net. If taken further back the net-player will have more time to reach it, for the shuttle will have further to travel before it crosses the tape.

Similarly, drop-shots are to be avoided when one of the opponents is advancing to the net. A quick drive down the side line or across court will be more useful at such a moment—but the cross-court drive must be hit very quickly and very carefully directed or it may be smashed before it has passed out of reach.

It sometimes pays to return a short serve with a drop when the back-liner serves, for it may draw him to the net instead of his partner and so momentarily upset their combination—a result which should be the chief aim in attacking a back-and-front pair.

There is no great variety in clearing-shots; their principal requirement is good length, and such variety as there may be consists rather in purpose than in execution. I have said that their chief function is defence, but they may also be used very effectively as part of a system of attack, and in such cases the individuality of opponents is an important factor. Also as an unexpected variant of smashing or dropping or driving they often have excellent results, but they should not be used in a haphazard sense as a meaningless and unnecessary alternative to attacking shots. Nor, as a general rule, when a real chance for scoring with a smash is available, should any other kind of shot be attempted.

It may be seen from this short survey of "strokes in general," that when the novitiate stage is passed the use of the brain becomes the highest requisite of a Badminton player. Other things being equal, it is the consistent choice of the *right* shot rather than the brilliant shot that decides the ultimate issue, and no merely forceful player will succeed against a forceful player plus finesse. Indeed, a great deal of superior force may be successfully combated by superior placing. For it is the brain, combined with technical excellence and speed of foot, which produces the highest class of Badminton expert.



Photograph by Millar & Harris

BACKHAND "CROSS" DROP-SHOT

If the shuttle were taken nearer the top of the net, the body would be less bent, but the position of the feet, arm and racquet would be approximately the same. (See page 76.)

SECTION IV

TACTICS.

The concluding paragraph of the last section might well serve as an introductory paragraph to the present one. For "tactics" stand for the *mental* branch of the game we have hitherto been discussing chiefly from the physical point of view—that is to say, we have been occupied principally with the question of what shots it is possible to play and how to play them, with only side-references to the right moment at which they ought to be played.

I shall now assume that any beginner who has cared to follow my arguments so far is by this time familiar with the actual strokes themselves and ready to hear something about their tactical application.

As I have recently stated, the *right* shot is more to be desired than a brilliant shot (though happily the two may often be combined) and it must now be explained as far as possible what the right shot is likely to be. As a beginning I must emphasise once more the fundamental purpose in all good Badminton, which is also the cornerstone, as it were, of its tactical aspect, and that purpose is—attack. Players who wish to study the scientific side of the game and not merely to acquire some proficiency in execution, must get it firmly established in their minds that the whole duty of a good tactician is to gain and keep the attack, and that

every stroke which is not a directly attacking shot should be played with this ultimate purpose definitely in view. By which I mean that even defensive shots should not aim *only* at defence, but that when there is any time for directing and controlling the shot at all, it should be directed and controlled with the idea of *leading up* to a chance for attack later on.

It is easier to indicate methods of attack than of defence, for "hit hard and hit down" is a piece of advice that anyone can comprehend, and it is also the natural instinct of most players when the shuttle is in a position to be so treated. The maxim, moreover, needs very little qualification, for except on occasions in which experience must be the principal guide, it applies to almost every case, and no teacher of Badminton would ever tell his pupils *not* to hit hard and to hit downwards whenever a suitable opportunity occurs.

But in the special formation of back-and-front the suitability—for the back-liner, that is—is sometimes more apparent than real, for he has his position in court to consider in relation to attacking shots, so that it is by no means invariably wise for him to hit hard whenever he can. Risks that are well worth taking when the support of a partner can be depended on in case of non-success, must not be taken nearly so readily by the back-liner, whose partner's position is fixed. Some risks must be taken, of course (and the taking of a great risk at the right moment is the sign of a great player), but he must depend upon his own dexterity and speed of foot to extricate himself from the result if the result is not as planned. What he must not do, except *in extremis*, is to stake everything upon making

a winning shot when a brilliant return will leave him hopelessly stranded. He must always reckon with the *possible* return of every shot, however certain a winner it may appear (for nothing is quite impossible at Badminton in the realm of defence), so that he must always leave himself a loop-hole of recovery whenever he can.

I do not mean to imply that any back-liner who, having worked up for and seized his opening, is beaten by a fine return, has necessarily played badly. In a first-class match, brilliance in defence will be met with as often as brilliance of attack, and brilliant defence, as we shall see, principally consists in the ability to transform itself into attack. But the question a back-liner should have, more or less sub-consciously, in his mind all the time, is: "How do I stand if this shot is returned?" and his chief aim must be to see that he does not "stand" at a hopeless disadvantage when it does return. There is probably no branch of the game in which tactics play such an important part (just as good combination is of the first importance in playing sides), and the back-liner—like a chess-player—must always see a number of "moves" ahead of him when making his stroke.

If, for instance, he smashes down his forehand line he must remember that a quick drive or a high clear may be sent to his left-hand corner, and he must have a mental preparation of his body to convey itself to that spot if necessary, and a mental idea of how to deal with the shuttle when he reaches it. As, however, such a position will not be a very promising one for him if he is already at all far forward down the right side line, he should try to place his smash in such a way (always

having regard to the particular opponent) that the shuttle will have to be returned anywhere but to that inconvenient spot. Similarly, if he is obliged to put up a defensive clear, he should try to direct it to the place or the opponent from which a smash is least to be feared. And in this connection it may be suggested that he should usually try to clear to his woman opponent if she is playing sides. If she is at the net, or if (as might be the case in ladies' doubles) both opponents smash equally well, he should try to find the extreme left-hand corner of the court in the hope of making a smash improbable. Should he not be able to manage this, a middle line clear is perhaps the safest, for the angle of the smash will be less acute, and he will therefore have a better chance of retrieving it.

But as so much must always depend on circumstances, perhaps the safest general observation that can be made to a back-liner (and I am not attempting a detailed scientific exposition) is that he should work out his system of attack with the idea of making openings for his partner rather than for himself. If he can force his opponents to give her a chance at the net it is usually more conclusive than his own attempt at scoring, for she will be better situated for bringing off an untakable "kill." Nor has she to concern herself quite so much with the risk of its possible return, since her partner is behind her to cover her failure to score outright. So that the back-liner's purpose, and one which he must patiently and cunningly pursue by every means at his command, should be to compel his opponents, sooner or later, to put up a "sitter" at the net. Only such a superhumanly active and untiring player as Mr. Devlin

can afford to say to his net-partner, as he has said to me, "Don't try to win the point—just hit it down"! Most back-liners will agree with me, I think, that nothing is so depressing as to see their partners fail to "win the point" after they have struggled long and laboriously to gain a good opening.

And that brings me to the question of tactics for the net-player. We have seen that so far as combination is concerned her task is anything but a light one; but with regard to the actual placing of the shuttle when it is clearly her turn to hit it there should be much less confusion in her mind. Confusion arises from uncertainty whether she should take or leave it, as has been described, but once that is settled her duty is comparatively clear. And that duty, even for a novice at the net—perhaps *particularly* for a novice—is always to hit the shuttle *down* whenever she can. The scheme of attack lies in her partner's hands, and her determination should be never to waste his efforts when her own chance comes. Naturally she will not be able to hit the shuttle downwards every time, for drop-shots will not necessarily be high enough for her to pounce on. Therefore she must—to be a good net-player—be able to drop really well and to *go on* dropping till the shuttle is either sent again to her partner or lifted an inch too high above the net within her own reach, when the recovered chance to hit down must at once be seized.

This is a counsel of perfection, of course, and must be taken as an indication of the theory of net-play rather than its invariable practice.

Some net-players—notably Miss Hogarth, and Miss E. G. Peterson in a less degree—are able to "intercept" cross-smashes, and so save their partners a

considerable amount of extra exertion. But unless this stroke comes more or less naturally and easily I do not much recommend the attempt, for—though invaluable when successful—it is rather disastrous when it fails. When it succeeds it results in an oblique overhead drop-shot that falls very short and sharply in the court of the player who has smashed, and it usually wins the point owing to the quickness of its return; but if it fails to yield this special stroke there is really no point in taking it at all, for the shuttle will go nowhere in particular (if it even goes over the net) and its unexpected interception will only upset the back-liner and probably leave him out of position and certainly unprepared for its next return.

That is the main argument against the net-player's taking any shot which should have been left to her partner. It is not so much that she may not be able to deal with it fairly effectively as that her partner, anticipating the shuttle in such-and-such a place, will not only have moved to that place, but will already have decided on his own shot and its probable return; so that his whole plan will be sent awry and he can neither anticipate the shuttle's return nor prepare for his next shot—and the next and the next, as he should ordinarily have done. He is thus taken unawares, and may be obliged to play a more or less meaningless stroke without any "system" behind it—and such occasions are generally the undoing of a back-and-front pair.

The net-player, therefore, must resolve always to try *not* to interfere in her partner's schemes, but rather to further them by making the most of her own chances, and by *never* clearing the shuttle (once she is up at

the net) except with the definite purpose—mentioned earlier—of taking advantage of a gap on the back line. Even so she must be careful to play a quick and comparatively low clear or it will be transformed into a merely defensive shot—of which a net-player should never be guilty if she can possibly play any other shot instead.

So much, then, for tactics when playing back-and-front, though I fully realise I have dealt with the subject only in a more or less elementary way. But the whole aim of this book is to explain the *elements* of every department of the game, and readers who have grasped those elements and are becoming good players, with a desire for more advanced instruction, should pass on to the books of Sir George Thomas and Mr. Mack, with regard to which my own book is written in a preparatory rather than a competitive spirit.

The tactics employed by a sides pair must have the same fundamental idea of attack, but some difference of method will be required according to the type of opposition. The right method to adopt against a back-and-front combination seems to come comparatively easily to some players, while others learn it only very slowly, and some never really learn it at all. Personally I have always found the sides formation much harder to tackle than a stronger pair playing back-and-front; in the former case it appears to me much more difficult to form any definite plan of campaign, and furthermore there is much more temptation to indulge in “fancy shots” when there is no player constantly at the net to make them quite impracticable. But this view is not shared by the majority of players, to whom the back-and-front

combination certainly presents the greater difficulty. In fact, when Miss Hogarth first came to the front as a net-player superior to any hitherto known, it seemed to her puzzled opponents hardly possible to get the shuttle past her at all, or at least without making matters very easy for her partner. But, as happens in other departments of life, the demand created the supply, in the sense that means were evolved to combat this new peril. Mr. Chesterton was largely responsible for these means, and the methods which he more or less introduced are very much the same as those obtaining to-day.

The chief things to aim at are to prevent the back-and-front pair from attacking consistently, and to "break up" their combination, which usually means to lure them away from their rightful positions. This requires clever placing, and the knowledge of how to execute a rather different type of stroke from those commonly employed. One such stroke is the "half-court shot"—which means a comparatively slowly and deliberately played stroke, directed as near the side line as possible, which would fall just too far back for it to be legitimately attempted by the net-player, but which does not rise high enough for her partner to smash. Properly played, such a shot compels the back-liner to drop, clear, or drive his return; and since he will very often select the last (owing to its quality of attack), another characteristic stroke against back-and-front comes to the fore. That is, the quick cross-court drive in reply. There is probably no shot so devastating to the back-liner. It comes so quickly—particularly when it is in return to his own drive—and keeps so comparatively low that he has very little time

to recover from his position near the side line, a position specially to be taken advantage of by his opponent for the use of this kind of stroke.

The shuttle should be taken about shoulder high, hit hard and very quickly, kept level, with a tendency to drop quickly, if possible, and directed at as sharp an angle as can be contrived without sending it beyond the side line. It is not a very easy shot to execute, so it should be assiduously practised, for it is undoubtedly one of the strongest weapons of offence against a back-and-front pair. The net-player can only rarely intercept it to any purpose and the back-liner is usually ill-placed for dealing with it owing to its very rapid arrival at a spot some distance away from him. Its length, though not its pace, should be varied according to the back-liner's nearness to the net. If he has been drawn well forward by a clever half-court shot, the drive should be directed far back and at a less acute angle; if he is not near the net a shorter drive at a sharper angle is required.

It is perhaps a little confusing to say "its length though not its pace" should be varied, etc., for if a shuttle is required to travel some distance it must be hit a little harder (if kept at the same level) than if it has only a short way to go. But what I want to emphasise is that the kind of drive I am describing must *always* be hit *quickly and sharply*, or it will fail of its purpose. The actual force of the stroke must vary according to how far the shuttle is required to travel, but a rapid flight is necessary for either a long drive or for one hit at an angle across the court.

The employment of these two types of shot—the "half-court" and the drive—are the chief tactical

essentials for success against a first-class back-and-front pair, against which no amount of steady clearing or smashing is normally of much avail. A persistent rain of hard and well-placed smashes would perhaps have the same effect in *time*, but no clever back-liner is going to allow the opportunity for that kind of attack. The other sort he is more powerless to prevent, and anything that takes the control of the game out of his hands is of enormous advantage to the opposition. Smashing will of course be needed as well; and here a useful hint may be given to players who have not grasped the fact for themselves: it is much more difficult for a back-liner to "turn in his tracks" than to continue in a forward direction, so that smashes should not be systematically directed first into one court and then into the other. This may be done for a few strokes to get him well "on the run," but when once that is achieved a smash aimed at the spot he has *just left* is usually more effective than if aimed at the spot he is instinctively making for. He cannot afford to linger after retrieving a smash down one side, whatever his expectations may be, for his lingering will be at once observed and taken advantage of. He must therefore always try to recover a central position after making a defensive clear, and it is while he is so recovering that he may best be caught by a hard smash into the area where the smash was last placed. However good his footwork may be, the necessity for a swift turn will render him less able to deal effectively with the shuttle when he reaches it. And it is to making it difficult for him to place his shots—to giving him little or no time to think or to control the shuttle—that the whole mind of his opponents must be given if they are to succeed.

A favourite "slogan" of Mr. Chesterton's when playing against a back-and-front combination was "*Bustle them,*" and this idea may fitly be adopted as the basis of operations against such a pair. As long as the back-liner has plenty of time he usually has the situation well in hand; but "bustle him," hit quickly, keep the shuttle low and keep him guessing, and the control of the situation often passes into his opponents' hands.

One other reminder before I pass on. Net-players vary in their capacity to deal with half-court shots; some step a good deal farther back than others do, some have a longer reach, some leave almost all such shots to their partners. The *length* of these shots must therefore be calculated accordingly, or the player of them may find they are intercepted every time. He should note carefully at the beginning of the match (if he has no knowledge beforehand) whether the net-player steps back to take such shots and how far she seems able to deal with them *effectively*, and he must regulate his stroke in accordance with his observation. For the tempting of net-players to take shots which they cannot really reach is an important part of placing. Another point I have overlooked is the necessity, in clearing to the back line, of clearing really far back. I have mentioned it in connection with clearing in general, but against a back-liner it is highly important. Unnecessary clearing is specially to be avoided against back-and-front, but when nothing else is possible the clear should be very near the back line. Nor, except when purely defensive or when time is badly required, should it be sent too high, as extra height gives the back-liner his great requisite—time. There is probably no *less* fatiguing and exacting position.

on court—odd as it may seem—than that of a capable back-liner whose opponents do not understand how to make things difficult for him. He can place the shuttle where he chooses, with a minimum of effort, and he can anticipate its return to a nicety if neither “bustling” tactics nor subtle placing are adopted against him. In short, as I have said, he has the control of the rallies comfortably in his own hands, and such a state of affairs invariably ends in his own success. Much patient and steady defence and much running about and excellent retrieving of difficult shots is thus often sadly wasted by opponents who lack the one essential of finesse against a back-and-front pair.

I approach the subject of tactics as between “sides and sides” couples with considerable diffidence, having already confessed to my weakness in this respect. But one thing I may venture to state with some confidence is that in such cases individuality counts for a great deal, and careful attention must be paid to the special characteristics of each opponent. That applies to every branch of the game, but more so against sides than against a back-and-front pair, whose relative positions in court can be anticipated with greater exactitude.

In mixed doubles, if the man is markedly inclined to try and protect his partner either by actual poaching or by too great an encroachment into her domain, his own corner, side line, or corner of the net is often a wise objective; if the woman is much given to running up to the net for drop-shots, these should not be too much indulged in and her opponent's aim should be to keep her at the back of the court and to draw her partner towards the net. If the pair are of the stone-

wall kind, subtle placing is of high importance, and it very often pays against a rather impregnable defence to *slow down* the pace of the game. Fine defenders are apt to warm up to their work in proportion to the speed of the rallies, and if this is diminished they are sometimes found to be a little at a loss. This fact was rather noticeably demonstrated, in my view, by the amazing partnership of Mr. Devlin and Miss K. McKane. The faster the game, the more brilliant grew their defence (brilliant at all times) and the only hope, as a rule, of making any headway against them was to reduce the pace of the attack. It forced a certain hesitation upon them, which was not so well suited to their phenomenally rapid and forceful methods. I can only remember two occasions on which I saw them beaten (after their partnership was fully established) by sheer *force* of attack. The point may be usefully remembered in dealing with other players who have a conspicuously fine defence or whose attack itself becomes more brilliant when the game becomes exceptionally fast.

When the defence is comparatively weaker, a waiting game is sometimes well-advised. I do not mean that no attack should be attempted, but merely that fewer risks should be run and greater steadiness aimed at in the hope that the risks will be fatally taken by the other side and that they will "beat themselves." As a notoriously impatient player myself, I know only too well how admirably such tactics may succeed. Even Mr. Chesterton, great player and great tactician though he was, was not quite exempt from the same weakness, at all events when playing with me, and it is significant that at the most successful period of our partnership we

never succeeded in beating that fine pair, Mr. B. L. Bisgood and Miss Gowenlock, whose remarkable steadiness and patience and accuracy (combined with magnificent smashing on the one hand and admirable defensive drop-shots on the other) was always too much for our greater impetuosity. I have an idea that the same fact sometimes robs Miss Elton and Mr. Hodge of a victory against Mrs. Head and Mr. Du Roveray, two pairs who usually have rather prolonged tussles against each other. Accurate and steady in attack as Mr. Hodge and Miss Elton are, the opponents mentioned, when really "wound up," sometimes wear them out by sheer brilliance of defence *added* to the powerful quality of Mr. Du Roveray's smashes. No *mere* defence, without the support of such smashing, is likely to carry its exponents to the greatest heights (and I think I am right in saying that Miss Gowenlock and Mr. Bisgood never actually won a championship together), but a combination of the two—as in the conspicuously fine defending couples I have mentioned—will generally carry them a considerable distance; and "on their day" such couples may contrive to beat almost anybody.

The method to be employed by a back-liner against a sides pair differs only in relation to his own position in court and the dangers to which that may expose him. We know that it is of paramount importance for him to be either on, or angling for, the attack, and his scheme of play will be largely governed by the necessity for adapting his strokes to the individual opponent and by his position in court at the moment of playing them. When opposing a formation similar to his own, he must aim at producing for the other back-liner the difficulties he most dreads for himself. But his task is rendered a little harder by

having in this case to avoid the drop-shots which are ordinarily so useful to him in leading up to a chance to score; and he must depend principally on well-placed smashes, clever clearing, and cross-court drives. In the execution of all these he must always be very much alert to the importance of "the angle of return," for if (particularly) he plays a quick drive at the *wrong time*, he is very likely to be beaten by a cross-drive in reply. Half-court shots, moreover, if intercepted, are likely to prove more fatal in their result than if his partner were not tucked under the net.

For the defending pair—or for any pair during a period of defence—tactics ought to imply a persistent manœuvring to gain the attack, and every shot must as far as possible be directed to weakening the opponents' onslaught and seeking a loop-hole for snatching the attack out of their hands. I may seem to be labouring this subject of attack, but it is such a necessary feature of success in first-class Badminton that its importance can hardly be overestimated, and in approaching any and every aspect of the game it is the first principle that suggests itself for emphasis.

Thus, when obliged to clear defensively, good length is, as we have already seen, the chief thing to aim for, since hard smashing from the extreme back of the court is not likely to prove very deadly. Height in clearing is often a great advantage, in that it gives the defender more time to extricate himself from an awkward situation. But it must be remembered that it gives the attacking side more time as well, so that there will be occasions when a quick clear, not too high, will help the defender to gain the attack. This variation in the length and height of defensive clears is a thing that experience will teach, in

relation to the right moment for each variety, but it can do no harm to point out the existence of some choice in the matter.

To return a smash with a drop-shot is often a wise move, unless someone is guarding the net, in which case it is too dangerous to be wise, though it can be achieved successfully now and then. When there is no obstacle at the net a cross drop-shot is frequently very useful, as its direction cannot always be anticipated quickly enough for either partner to pounce upon it. If a player makes a habit of "dropping off a smash" he will find that his assailant's partner will often make a habit also of "running in" on the chance of a kill at the net. When this is the case the drop-shot may advantageously be varied by a cross-court drive, which it is difficult for the advancing player to deal with or for his partner to reach owing to the quickness of its return. It must always be remembered that in this quickness of return (particularly in reply to a hard-hit shot) lies the special value of any kind of drive, so that chances for its use should be keenly watched for. It is the shot which more often than any other converts defence into attack, so that its value—bearing in mind our first principle—will easily be appreciated.

Another thing to remember in connection with defence is that the more variety a player can achieve in returning smashes the more likely he is to weaken the attack, so that beginners ought to practise every kind of return instead of clinging too conservatively to the obvious and orthodox (and relatively easy) defensive clear.

In the section dealing with combination I have already mentioned this further fact, that when two people are being fiercely attacked and having a bad time

of it, it often pays to alter their formation for a short time; a change to back-and-front, or the converse, often throws their opponents a little out of gear for a minute or two, and during those minutes much may be done to improve a bad position. A prominent instance of this springs to my mind—sorrowfully, for it marked my own undoing! Playing in the final at the first Worthing Tournament in 1925, Mr. Mack and I encountered Mrs. Horsley and Mr. Uber, after their defeat of Mr. Devlin and Miss McKane in one of the fastest and most thrilling matches I have seen for a long time. We lost the first game, but won the second fairly comfortably and were doing well in the third; but suddenly everything began to go wrong—I became confused and worried and very nervous, and though to the best of my recollection we had been leading by about 12-8, we eventually lost the match. It was only afterwards that I realised that our opponents had suddenly changed their game, and that whereas this had been a modified form of back-and-front (a formation to my liking) by the end of the match they were playing side-by-side. It was this change which had entirely “thrown me out,” yet at the time I did not realise what had happened. It will seem very stupid of me, and no doubt it was, but the incident serves to prove how useful such a sudden change of formation may be. In the excitement and anxiety of a close finish it is not always as easy as it might seem to become aware of an alteration of this kind. Hence its great usefulness in a crisis to the pair who are getting the worst of things. Hence, also, as I have pointed out before, the great usefulness of not being limited to one style of play.

SECTION V

HINTS TO TOURNAMENT PLAYERS

The first piece of advice to be given to anyone entering a tournament, whether for the first time or not, is—*“Be punctual.”*

A delay of ten minutes or so in starting a match in the earlier rounds may not seem a very serious matter, but it should always be realised that anything which tends to hold up the programme tends also to make things difficult, both for the referee and for *other players*, towards the end of the day. Out of consideration for fellow-competitors, therefore, everyone should make a point of being ready to play when called on to do so. For busy people who are obliged to hurry away from work to play their matches some small licence may perhaps be allowed, though even these should use every endeavour to be in time; but there is no excuse for unpunctuality either for more leisured people or—especially—for those who have actually reported their arrival but have neglected to change their clothes in good time, or who have chosen to go away and have lunch or tea without first finding out how soon they will be wanted on court.

Many referees do, and all referees should, adopt the practice of posting notices warning players not to leave the Hall without permission; where this is done, any competitor who omits to take the precaution ought to be penalised by being scratched if not present when called

upon. The threat of such treatment appears on all tournament entry forms, and it is sometimes carried into effect when competitors have not put in an appearance after a reasonable margin of time; but when they have been present and have elected to disappear without permission referees are usually too soft-hearted or too timid to enforce the penalty. Yet in either case the delay may be equally upsetting to other players, since it may involve the necessity of their playing several hard matches in rapid succession when they should normally have had plenty of time to rest in between. Or it may involve the even more exasperating consequence of an important game's being postponed to a time when the light (so often a difficulty at provincial tournaments) is no longer at its best.

The majority of unpunctual people probably offend through ignorance of these possible and undeserved consequences for others; but regular tournament players cannot reasonably plead ignorance—indeed they are generally ready enough to complain with great bitterness if they are kept waiting themselves! Everyone, therefore, who forms the habit of playing in tournaments should also form the habit—from the *beginning* of their careers—of punctual arrival at the Hall and punctual preparation for any match they have been called upon to play.

There are undoubtedly occasions when they may fairly claim a longer interval between their matches than has been allowed, and when delay is caused thereby it is usually attributable to a faulty arrangement of the programme. But at the same time, competitors who have reached an advanced stage in several events must recognise that a certain amount of personal inconvenience

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attaches to their success, and they should not be unduly indignant if time does not permit of their being as fresh for each match as they could wish. A hard draw nearly always involves considerable fatigue for the players who battle their way through, and it is often merely "the luck of the draw" if they are too tired to do themselves full justice at the finish. It must be remembered that too much waiting about and too long an interval between one match and another may be very disorganising to their opponents, who have a right to be considered as well.

Care should be taken by competitors in handicap events, whose names are not familiar to the handicapper, to fill in their entry forms correctly and to give as much information (of a useful kind) with regard to their "form" as they possibly can. If they omit to do so they must not complain if their handicaps are not quite what they might wish. Sometimes they receive more points on a first appearance than is justly their due; on these occasions complaint is more rarely heard, so they should be prepared to take the bad with the good and to receive perhaps fewer points than they deserve if their information has not helped the handicapper very much. With the exception of the All England Championships, all Badminton tournaments at present are run by people who give their services voluntarily, so that criticism should not be too unrestrained if either refereeing or handicapping leaves something to be desired. Private expression of opinion is another matter, but some competitors do not hesitate to carry their complaints openly to the executive; and I suggest to young players, for their own sakes, that they will probably find tournaments pleasanter places if they

do not air their grievances within hearing of the referee and his colleagues.

I would also suggest that they should avoid "worrying" the referee. He has a difficult enough task to perform without having to answer a stream of unnecessary questions or to reiterate his reasons (which *may* be quite good ones) for not putting a particular match into court at the precise time his tormentor desires. Good referee or bad (and either is doing his best), competitors must abide by his decision, or the programme would never be got through at all, for everybody would naturally *prefer* that each match should be played when most convenient to themselves.

And here I feel impelled to say—though many people may violently disagree with me—that if obscure competitors suspect that their wishes and rights are being rather set on one side for the convenience of "stars," they will be wise to try and remember that (although no "star" ought to be considered to the real detriment of lesser players) some extra consideration *is* perhaps due to the players who have reached the top of the tree. These players have all been beginners themselves in their day, and have had to go through the mill like their ultimate "victims;" if they emerge as champions they are entitled—in my view—to a *certain amount* of consideration from referees. I hasten to add that no true sportsman, however famous a champion, would ever willingly or knowingly take advantage of his status to allow an injustice to be done to a "rabbit," even if a too sycophantic referee presented him with the opportunity. But the life of a tournament player bears some analogy to life as a whole, in that one must work for one's best privileges. And a champion has worked, in

his own line, hard enough in the preliminary stages of his career to earn just a *little* indulgence when he reaches the front rank. I repeat that no champion should (nor, I hope, would) take undue advantage of his privilege in the direction of needless unpunctuality or demands that his matches should be put on to suit himself and no one else; but I have put forward my view—scandalous as it may seem to some—with the idea of a little soothing the feelings of obscure competitors who may think they are entitled to equal consideration because they have paid the same entrance fee. This argument is quite unanswerable from one point of view—but let the same competitor reach the charmed circle of champions and it will be strange if he does not then recognise the existence of another point of view! So I put before him—for what it is worth—this suggestion that he should try not to resent a possible shade of “favouritism,” as between himself and a champion, on the part of referees. Let him remember that he may be a champion himself one day. Let him also remember that these superior beings were once “rabbits” like himself, and no better treated, at that time, than he is now; let him remember that they have supported the game he is interested in for a long time, that they have helped to develop it in some degree, and that probably several of them are responsible for the improved conditions of play at the present time compared with conditions obtaining in earlier days; let him remember all this, and perhaps he will feel it a little less unreasonable and unjust and iniquitous that although his entrance fee is the same as theirs he does not meet with quite the same degree of respect and indulgence from the referee. Or if, for the soothing

of his sense of injury, these reminders are of no avail, let him finally remember that the *world is like that*, and no amount of grumbling or righteous indignation is going to alter human nature so much that—even with regard to a mere game—a “rabbit” will be treated as the equal of a “star.”

Perhaps I speak rather feelingly on the subject because I served a long apprenticeship myself, having played in as many tournaments as I could manage for seven years before I secured my first championship. That may influence my (possibly heretical) view that champions are entitled to reap the fruits of their labour after a long time of labouring. But in saying “entitled” I wish to be clearly understood as not suggesting that champions should ever *claim* any privilege, but merely that “rabbits” should not grudge any (limited) privileges that may be extended to leading players. I am much against any extra license with regard to unpunctuality where champions are concerned, and no player, whatever his status, should ever be (or expect to be) considered at the expense of another player in the matter of absence or the granting of special leave.

Again I ought perhaps to apologise for labouring a point, but in view of the heading of this section I feel the subject to be one on which I may legitimately state my views. This particular view is given, not in defence of champions, but with the idea of helping the young player towards an attitude of mind which may save him some soreness during the early stages of his career as a tournament player. To warn him not to be (uselessly) jealous of the privileges of champions may save him from the discomfort of nursing a grievance,

just as to warn him not to be unpunctual may save him from the annoyance of being scratched.

To the majority of really inexperienced tournament players the handicap events will naturally appeal more than others, for they offer a better chance of survival. A word or two may fitly be said, therefore, with regard to the right tactics to employ, for these are not the same as in level events.

The most important thing to remember is that tactics must vary according to whether points are being conceded or received. Players receiving a considerable start—say, ten points or more—should not aim too much at “steadiness,” for their opponents are almost bound to be a good deal their superiors in this respect. They should therefore try to utilise every good shot they may possess, in the hope of scoring. Two players receiving ten points or more are of course not likely to have a large variety of winning strokes, but they are often capable of smashing hard or of making some kind of drop-shot which is not too easily dealt with (when it comes off), so they should take every opportunity of trying to score—with smashes or fancy-shots, as the case may be—even if their efforts fail more often than not. *Especially*, be it noted, when their own side is serving; since they have only five points (or perhaps fewer) to make in order to win a game, it is imperative that when their side is “in” they should do their utmost to seize every chance of scoring, for it will be no use waiting for their opponents to make mistakes. Those are precisely the tactics the opponents themselves will be employing, with a better hope of success. The mere fact, moreover, that players receiving such a

long start are not at all timid about "going out for their shots" will tend to unsteady their adversaries—who cannot afford to be unsteady in such circumstances. So my advice to the receiver of long odds (particularly when odds are owed as well as given, which makes a longer game, so that they can afford more mistakes) is "Go for your shot all the time." It can do very little harm (since attempts at steadiness will probably be of small avail) and it may do a great deal of good, for the shots are quite likely to come off now and then, and with each point gained the adversaries will either be less inclined to take risks themselves (which means that they will attack less) or else they will be unnerved and led into taking more risks than they can afford at such a stage in the game.

For the givers and owers of odds (who will, of course, be much more experienced players) the opposite tactics must be employed. They should concentrate on keeping the rally going and only trying to score when a sound opportunity arrives. The amount of risk that may be taken must naturally accord with the difference in points; the greater the difference the fewer the risks, particularly when a long start is being *given*. In such circumstances the greatest care must also be taken never to *serve a fault*. The opponents' weakness should make it unnecessary to serve with any great subtlety, and the main point should be to get the shuttle safely into play, after which the givers of odds must aim at steadiness, combined with accuracy when a chance for scoring arrives.

When two very ill-matched pairs oppose each other in level events I think the weaker couple will do well to follow my advice to the receivers of long odds, and

go for their shots. They stand a much better chance of making a respectable score by this means, for their opponents will be taken a little by surprise and may become slightly flurried, which often results in the loss of a number of points. The weaker pair will also, probably, learn more from their encounter with "stars" if they adopt an aggressive game than if they merely try to be steady. They will find out, no doubt, that many shots which seemed very telling in club play are no use at all against experts, and if they use their brains they may discover *why* this is so, and profit accordingly. They may also discover that certain shots they can already play and some they are reduced to experimenting with, are really valuable strokes, so that between the two discoveries they will have acquired some most useful information for the future. And even if they are beaten by a substantial margin the realisation of this fact ought to hearten them up to try their luck again. The intelligent player of games will generally find a defeat much more instructive than a victory.

SECTION VI

COMPARISONS OF STYLE AND GENERAL REMARKS.

In every book dealing with the technique and science of Badminton certain small differences may be found in the methods prescribed; but, in the main, the precepts of one expert will rarely contradict those of another expert, however different the actual practice of the two players may appear to the casual observer. The aim of every piece of advice will be approximately the same; every teacher will try to explain the *purpose* of the grip to be adopted, the movements of the body and the feet, and the tactics to be employed. And the technical purpose will always resolve itself into "ease and harmony of movement," the tactical purpose into "attack."

Yet if only one teacher had coached all the Badminton players there have been since the game began, there would still be much the same variety in result as there is to-day, and no two players would ever play any similar shot in precisely the same manner. For individual style will always superimpose itself on merely mechanical methods of stroke-production; thus we have had a Chesterton, a Fitton, a Sautter (to mention no others) in the past, and thus we have a Thomas, a Devlin, a Mack, and other champions in the present, each pursuing the same fundamental

purpose of Badminton, yet each, by virtue of his individuality, setting his own seal upon the many strokes in the game which—reduced to their essence—are common to all.

It is this very individuality that provides the charm and interest of Badminton, for if it were reduced to an exact science the element of surprise would be sadly lacking; every shot could be anticipated with certainty, and however good the shots in themselves the game would soon pall. But as the brain and the body of every player differ from the brain and the body of every other player nothing can ever be anticipated with absolute certainty, for the individual movements of mind and body will induce a slight variation in the shuttle's flight, pace, and angle in every type of shot. Even net-players, whose game is in a sense more stereotyped than other people's, have the same individuality of execution; and the three leading net-players of the present day—Miss Hogarth, Miss E. G. Peterson and Mrs. Uber (Mrs. Horsley hardly coming into the category of pure net-players)—all produce their strokes quite differently although aiming at very much the same result.

Similar general tendencies, however, are to be found among players of a particular type; some rely on steadiness only, some on hard hitting, some on variety and subtlety, some on several of these combined; so that there are distinct "classes" to which any expert may belong, even though players of the same class exhibit their individuality just the same. No one could suggest that Sir George Thomas and Mr. R. Du Roveray, for instance, were of the same "type" among men, nor Mrs. Horsley and Miss Elton among women players.

Mr. Chesterton and Mr. Sautter are examples in the past of widely differing types, for whereas the latter (although possessing many beautiful drop-shots) relied principally upon great severity and speed, Mr. Chesterton's supreme excellence lay, among other things, in his wonderful *control* of the shuttle, his ability to conceal his intention till the last moment, and his great cleverness in adapting every shot to the individual opponent. His smash was of only average severity, but his placing compensated for its comparative mildness, and he was an absolute master of drop-shots from any part of the court. His chief weakness, perhaps, lay in an over-indulgence in trick-shots, but his extraordinary accuracy saved him from too frequent penalty; in his best days, in fact, he probably combined brilliance with accuracy to a greater degree than any other player.

Sir George Thomas must be included, I think, in the same class as Mr. Chesterton, though there were many differences of style between them. Sir George also relies less on his smash than on other strokes (though his smash is more severe than was Mr. Chesterton's), and he too owes most of his success to phenomenally clever placing and the adapting of his tactics to the particular opponent. I think no player has ever equalled his genius for directing the shuttle to whatever spot his adversary most dislikes!—though Mr. Chesterton also gauged his opponent's weaknesses to a nicety, and I used to feel very glad that I was more often his partner than his adversary. Sir George holds the longest championship record of any player now in the front rank; his first All England title was gained in 1906 (in partnership with Dr. H. N. Marrett) and his

most recent in 1924, with Mr. F. Hodge. To keep up championship form for eighteen years is a considerable achievement in itself, and Sir George must still be reckoned as the foremost English player.

Some players, equally good in their own way (though to my mind no one has ever *quite* equalled these two players, in their prime), do not fill one with the same terror of being "found out" in one's most vulnerable spot; and it is perhaps for this reason that I regard Sir George Thomas and Mr. Chesterton as the greatest all-round "artists" the game has yet produced.

Mr. Devlin, in spite of his amazing dexterity, is a rather different type of player from these two. He is more miraculous, more sensational, than either, but though his attack is extremely severe it is in the realm of defence that the "miracles" occur. He is probably quicker on the court than anyone has ever been, and his ability to make *safe* defensive shots from an apparently hopeless position is heart-breaking to opponents who believe they have really "got him" at last. Sir George is very brilliant in defence, but (as was the case with Mr. Chesterton) his brilliance lies oftener in making beautiful drop-shots in a crisis, whereas Mr. Devlin hits the shuttle to his opponents' back line at moments when it would be supposed that he could only—in desperation—stake everything on an accurate trick shot. In spite, therefore, of his not to be disputed brilliance in attack, his successes must be attributed *fundamentally* to his astounding power of defence. The combination of the two capacities has produced the most conspicuously "marvellous" player the game has ever known, but I think I am right in stating that he is not really the same type of player as Sir George and

Mr. Chesterton, on account of this difference in the basis of excellence.

The play of Mr. Mack, Mr. Devlin's great countryman, is more allied to that of Sir George. He possesses a beautifully easy style, and his height and reach produce the illusion that he is not moving about the court as quickly as some people do, but he is in reality extremely quick on his feet. He has a fine smash, which he is inclined to use rather sparingly, and a large range of clever shots, in most of which his wrist plays an important part. The rarely employed overhead backhand drop-shot is a speciality of his and very deceptive in its flight. He seems to give the shuttle a careless tap—but it goes where he wishes. That hint of carelessness characterises his play in general, from the onlooker's point of view. He is not careless in fact, but he is quiet and rather negligent in style, so that when one of his little "taps" happens to be inaccurate it is rather apt to suggest (to the uninitiated) mere carelessness! But those same little taps are usually extremely effective, as his opponents know to their cost, and their gentleness is only deceptive. In addition to the beauty of his stroke production Mr. Mack is also an admirable tactician and really studies the science of placing. He is not an exceptionally spectacular player, from one point of view, owing to the extreme quietness and neatness of his movements about the court, but he is particularly graceful and delightful to watch, and if his opportunities for constant practice among his equals were greater than they have been in the past, he would without doubt be one of the game's most finished and perfect exponents. Unfortunately he is seen too seldom in English Tournaments, though

he has won the Singles Championship once—in 1924—the Mixed Doubles in 1923, and the Men's Doubles in 1923 and 1926. He and Mr. Devlin probably form the strongest partnership in the world at the present time; their pace and force, combined with magnificent defence and great variety of stroke, make them practically invulnerable to the most scientific attack.

Mr. H. S. Uber, in addition to being a very fine doubles player, is one of the cleverest back-liners of the day. His defence is generally admirable, his smash ("round the head") very severe, and he is a leading exponent of the cross-court drive. He too uses his brain to great advantage, and his methods in general warrant his being included in the same class as Mr. Mack and Sir George. To this class Mr. F. Hodge also belongs. His attack is rather less severe, but he is extremely quick and possesses a wonderful range of shots; the delicacy and accuracy of his returns when being strongly attacked are sometimes quite phenomenal, and for hard-hitting players such as Mr. Du Roveray and Miss Elton he is an ideal partner, for he is particularly good at "nipping in" at the net. He is also among the best singles players of the present day.

Mr. Du Roveray, unlike the "Chesterton group," relies principally upon his powerful smash and leaves drop-shots severely alone. He uses his strongest weapon whenever he can (one or two players with a hard smash might well imitate him in this respect), and possesses in addition an exceptionally fine defence, more especially against a really fierce attack. The harder the smash, the more wall-like he becomes, and—as already mentioned—he is one of the players

against whom it is often good policy to "slow down" the pace of the game.

Among the present generation of expert women players there is rather less variety of method than there used to be—or so it seems to me. It seems to me that women (other than net-players) concentrate rather too much on defence and incline to neglect the finer shades of the game—but it is always difficult to compare earlier champions with those of the present day. And there are still exceptions; Mrs. Horsley upholds the best traditions of the semi-net game in mixed doubles, of which Mrs. Bisgood and Miss Mayston were once such brilliant exponents, while Miss Elton's attack is without doubt phenomenally powerful, although she relies principally on hard-hitting. She and Mrs. Head (holders, at the time of writing, of the Ladies' Doubles Championship) are, at their best, an admirable example of steadiness and accuracy. Miss Elton probably hits harder than any woman of the present (or any) day, and Mrs. Head also possesses an effective smash; but though they certainly employ this weapon whenever they have the chance they incline, on the whole, to waiting tactics, and do not indulge in many fancy shots or other subtleties. But with the exception of Mrs. Larcombe, that wonderful champion of the past, I doubt if anyone has ever equalled the excellence of Mrs. Head's backhand clearing shots, and her wonderful defence, combined with Miss Elton's severity, certainly makes the present champions a formidable pair.

Mrs. Barrett, present holder of the Ladies' Singles Championship, is one of the prettiest exponents of the game. She is exceptionally quick about the court and possesses a really hard smash, which is rendered the

more effective by the fact of her being left-handed, so that its usual angle is reversed and it is therefore difficult to anticipate correctly. She has so many clever drop-shots at her command, in addition to pace and severity, that she could well afford to adopt a more consistently attacking method than she indulges in at present. One feels that she a little underrates her capacity in this respect, and therefore shrinks with too much diffidence from the "enterprise" for which she seems by nature to be admirably fitted.

It is this same diffidence—if such it is—which perhaps prevents a number of players from developing their attacking powers to their fullest extent. It seems as though, finding that they can rely on certain shots (excellent in themselves), these players are nervous of experimenting in the direction of adding to their armoury of offensive weapons. As I have said before, when the winning of a match is the first thing to be considered, experiments are not greatly to be recommended, unless special circumstances demand a change of method at all costs. But in practice games the attention of the already *good* player might well be directed, not to demonstrating the shots at which he excels, but to improving or actually learning a type of stroke which is outside his ordinary range. The greatest player is the one who has every type of stroke at his fingers' ends, so that he may be able to adapt his game to the needs of the moment; he will then never find himself in the position of not knowing how to combat a particular pair of opponents whose methods give him few chances of playing the type of game on which he ordinarily relies. If this type is the defensive type, then in practice games he should decide to

disregard defence and go out for attacking shots all the time; if he is ordinarily a hard-hitter he should determine to discard smashes for the time being and to discover some other method of winning points; if he is primarily an attacker, relatively poor in defence, he should concentrate in practice games on learning how to defend. And with a view to these things he should as far as possible select suitable opponents. If his defence is relatively weak he should try to practise against a pair with a fierce attack. If his attack is relatively weak he should play against strong defenders so that in experimenting with new shots he may find out what particular stroke is likely to prove effective in attack. If his drop-shots are limited, he should oppose players who specialise in these, and then indulge in as many as possible. If his service is poor he should play against opponents to whom it is really difficult to serve. And if he is at a loss against the back-and-front formation he should oppose that formation as often as possible.

To competent players, no less than beginners, applies my previous advice to disregard the importance of winning or losing in practice games. No player is so good that he could not conceivably be better, and since matches and tournaments are not occasions on which it is wise to experiment overmuch, club play is the time for developing the weaker aspects of his talent and for the discovery of the new shots which are always the joy of the artist at Badminton.

And though I have suggested that a strengthening of defence will sometimes be required, I believe that in general the advice most needed, even by players who have long since left the novice stage behind, is to study every stroke, every aspect of tactics, and every subtlety

of combination with the main purpose of developing the power of *attack*.

Every shot played, however defensively, should have behind it the intention of gaining the attack; every system of opposition should be based on the determination to gain and keep the attack; and every delicate shade of combination should be inspired by its possible utility in advancing the opportunity for attack.

No Badminton player will ever be entitled to be called great who refuses to lay this injunction to heart and prefers merely to keep his end up in the hope that opponents will overreach and beat themselves. Victories gained, as they occasionally are, by such methods, are hollow and unmemorable (except to the victors) in comparison with the triumphs achieved by players whose sheer strength of attack has wrenched success out of the hands of opponents adopting the same methods as their own.

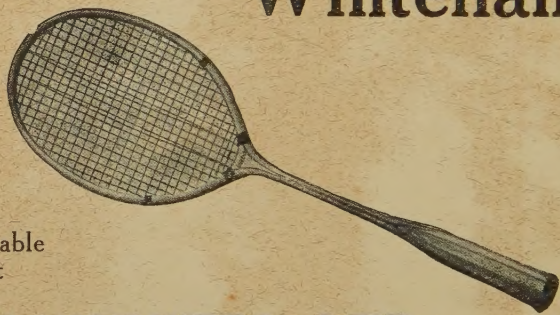
Sound defence is essential. Brilliant defence is a great help and a great gift. These things must by no means be ignored or despised, and I do not at all wish to be understood as advocating a reckless system of attack at all costs and whatever the circumstances. But I do wish to emphasise, in conclusion, the supreme importance—both to beginners who wish to climb to championship rank and to some players who have come near or actually reached it—of regarding every stroke in the game from the standpoint of its furtherance or otherwise of the chance of attack. And when these strokes have been duly studied and mastered it should be the aim of every player to confine himself as far as circumstances allow to such shots as will contribute to that end, and *not* to concentrate on the sort of steady but rather aimless

defence which so often detracts from the interest of the game at the present time.

I feel I need hardly apologise for laying this final stress upon a point often emphasised throughout these pages; for, as so repeatedly stated, attack is the main purpose of Badminton, and it is my hope that the advice I have given may to some extent help the beginner to understand how this main purpose is to be achieved. I can at least feel satisfied that if he does not understand what that main purpose *is*, it will not be for want of being told.

One last word: Badminton is not an easy game and cannot be mastered, even by the most gifted, in a few weeks. A certain amount of proficiency can be attained in a comparatively short time, and some players rise quite rapidly to the second rank; but between the second and the first-class player there is a very wide gap. Between even the ordinary first-class player and the real artist at the game there is perhaps an even wider gap. The artist, in fact, like the poet, is probably born rather than made, and no amount of instruction and patience will make a phenomenal player out of a person who does not possess the necessary attributes of greatness. But a good deal, I am convinced, *can* be done—both in improving the less gifted and hastening the rise of a potential “star”—by the careful, intelligent, patient study and practice of the general principles underlying ultimate greatness; and it is with the desire to help a naturally good player to be a little better and the naturally great player to reach his greatness a little sooner, that I have written this book.

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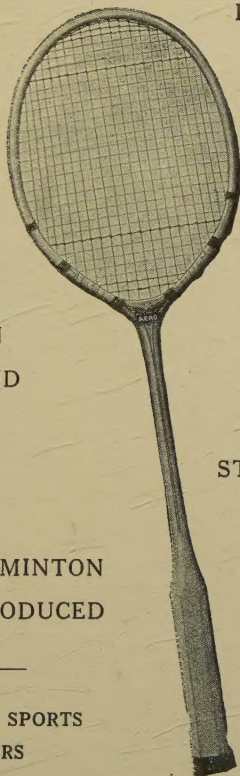
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